THE MASTER
A LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

WALTER RUSSELL BOWIE

BOOKS BY WALTER RUSSELL BOWIE

THE MASTER:
A Life of Jesus Christ

WHEN JESUS WAS BORN

THE INESCAPABLE CHRIST

SOME OPEN WAYS TO GOD

CHIMES AND THE CHILDREN

THE ARMOR OF YOUTH

THE ROAD OF THE STAR

SUNNY WINDOWS

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

THE MASTER

A LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

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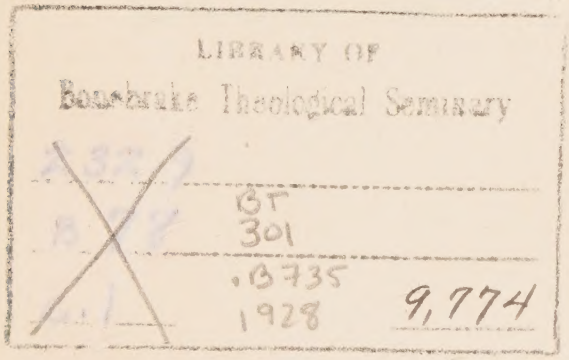
A LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

BY

WALTER RUSSELL BOWIE

RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK, AND FORMERLY RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, RICHMOND, VA.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TO

J. L. B.

Quae cotidie sua vita testatur Dominum
quem hoc libro laudare velim.

In footnotes I have named the books from which I have directly quoted; but I have not indicated the larger number which might have been referred to as authorities in support of those interpretations of Jesus' life and message which I have advanced. It will be found, I hope, that all the chapters following have been written in the light of that New Testament scholarship which has established its right to be commanding. But my purpose has not been to compile a commentary, but to create a portrait. I have desired—so far as one may dare attempt it—to portray the face and form of Jesus according to the truth; and to ascertain that truth, one needs to have considered the aspects of him which the surest scholars have reflected. But, in the end, a portrait must be judged not by its dissected elements, but by such living and convincing unity as may be manifest in itself. It is not helped by being pinned with tags of reference to show that this or that line and color are guaranteed by the fact that others have used them before.

In quotations from the Bible, I have ordinarily employed the American Revised Version. Occasionally, because of its incomparable literary beauty, when no important difference of meaning was at stake, I have used the King James, or "Authorised," Version (designated in the notes as "A. V."). Sometimes, also, in

reproducing conversation, I have abbreviated or paraphrased the New Testament sentences.

Various friends have read parts of the manuscript, and have given their helpful comments; and to all of them I am grateful. But most particularly I would thank President Henry Sloane Coffin, and Professor F. W. Foakes Jackson, of Union Theological Seminary, for their careful reading of the entire book and for their illuminating queries and suggestions; and Professor James Everett Frame, unwearying student, and counsellor who grudges neither time nor strength, to whom most I am indebted for such freedom from inaccuracies in scholarship as this book may possess.

Also I should like to take this chance to express my constant thanks to four friends and helpers without whom this and other previous books might never have been written,—my four secretaries: Miss Virginia P. Conrad, who in Richmond first made me know how invaluable a secretary could be; Deaconess Bertha M. Garvin, unflagging co-worker and mainstay in many responsibilities; Miss Anne L. Townsend (now the Marchesa Pellegrini-Quarantotti); and Miss Myra S. Baker, to whose quick and skilful interest the preparation of this particular book is due.

Walter Russell Bowie.

Grace Church Rectory, New York,
June, 1928.

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THE MASTER

A LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

PART I

THE APPROACH TO JESUS

CHAPTER I

THE ENDURING QUESTION

This book is another effort to interpret the meaning of the life of Jesus. There have been many books about him already, and there will be many more. But that does not matter. His significance has not been exhausted, either by the creed-makers or by those who have thought about him since. As the grandeur of a great mountain may always be seen in new perspectives when new trails are cut, so there are new aspects of Jesus which may be caught from the pathway of every genuine approach. In this book, then, I would try to mark the trail by which one would-be climber of the mountain has found the view that is most real to him. I cannot tell how many others will want to walk this way; only I must tell what I have seen.

Considered thus, it is not surprising that books about Jesus should be multitudinous. Once there were any books, it was inevitable that there should be many. But there is a deeper matter which is full of wonder. Why should this unending effort to interpret Jesus have begun at all?

For it is not a simple thing that we should be concerned to-day with a life lived nineteen hundred years ago. Men are not ordinarily remembered after they are

dead. It is estimated that some sixty billion people have lived upon this earth since the dawn of history. Of these the infinitely greater part have passed into a silence beyond the dimmest recollection. Like leaves before the touch of frost, their generations have fluttered down in the winter of their death, to moulder—like leaves—into the ground of old, dark forests of oblivion. Because we are familiar with history and biography, we take it as a matter of course that history and biography should be; but in truth, against the colossal generality of death and disappearance, the emergence of any life into a memory which outlasts the years is a high human marvel. How many names have lasted from three thousand or two thousand years ago? A few hundreds, more or less—as against the myriads of the forgotten. And of these names it is almost universally true that the reason why they have survived is because they are linked with certain obvious achievements which explain their dominance above the drift and welter of the years. We remember Alexander the Great because the whole world shook to the tread of his armies, and not only because of that; but also for the fact that in the wake of his advance the culture of Greece flowed like an inundation of the Nile, to fertilize whole provinces of the earth with influences out of which the growth of centuries should come. Aristotle and Plato are remembered not only because their voices echoed through their own time, but because they themselves put into written words the philoso-

phies which have been handed down through generations of disciples. Phidias and Praxiteles are remembered because the beauty which they chiselled into stone still in part exists for the eyes of living men to see; and the great Pharaohs of Egypt likewise because the pyramids which they builded still look out unmoved across the moving sands. Hannibal is remembered because he represented a civilization which almost bestrode the earth: and Julius Cæsar because he lifted another civilization to yet more imperial grandeur, and in his life and in his dying, shook the world with war. But none of these things were true of the life concerning which this book is written. No facts like these can be invoked to explain why we should be concerned with Jesus.

He never raised nor led an army. The only followers he had in his life-time came from among fishermen and country folk, with an occasional tax-collector who was not much less obscure and, according to the opinion of the time, considerably less reputable than the others. His enemies among the powerful groups of the community pointed scornfully to the fact that few or none of their class had believed in him. He never gathered his sayings into books nor troubled to leave any ordered formulation of what he had taught. The only reference to his having written anything is an account of how once in the midst of the silence of an angry and baffled crowd whom he confronted, he stooped and wrote with his finger in the dust. For most

of his life he was a carpenter, and he may have cut the beams for houses in which humble people lived; but he never created any monument of architecture which would endure beyond his time. He seemed to shake no civilizations either in his life or in his death. The entrenched powers of his time for the most part had never heard of him. The authorities in the small province where he lived, it is true, *had* heard of him, and some of them were moved to furious gusts of anger by his influence. But they thought they had effectually disposed of him at the last. They arrested him in Jerusalem, finding a safe time and occasion through the treachery of one of his own followers. By adroit political charges they secured his condemnation at the hands of a surly Roman procurator, and they carried him to a hill outside Jerusalem where he was crucified between two thieves whom the Romans happened to have in their hands for execution on that same day. It was reputed that he had done great works of healing and deliverance. Well, where was his power of deliverance now? The priests and rulers of the people —his own people—looked malignantly upon him as he hung upon the cross. "He saved others, himself he cannot save," they sneered. His leadership and influence had presumed to challenge theirs, and they had shown him what came of that. They hung him up there upon the cross, where he was dying—dying ignominiously and shamefully, as must be plain to all. And presently they turned their backs upon him and

went down into the city. They had settled with him, it seemed. This Jesus of Nazareth would not trouble his generation any more. And as for coming generations? The bare question would have seemed so silly as to win no answer beyond a curl of contemptuous lips. His followers were cowed and scattered. His figure was motionless on that black cross against the sombre sunset as the day went down. He was dead. It was the end of Jesus.

Certainly it seemed that they were right. What could be more certain than that the world was through with Jesus? But the eternal wonder is that they were wrong. This Man of Nazareth, hated, crucified, dishonored, has outlived all the mighty things that mocked him. With strange persistence, his influence endures. The thought of him haunts the minds of men with the unsolved problem of the secret of his power. His spirit comes alive and vibrant from those far centuries where that which once seemed the overwhelming significance of some of the greatest of his contemporaries is entombed with their forgotten dust. He challenges and disturbs us as others who were accounted conquerors and creators cannot do. It has been trenchantly said: "Cæsar was more talked about in his time than Jesus, and Plato taught more science than Christ. People still discuss the Roman ruler and the Greek philosopher, but who nowadays is hotly for Cæsar or against him; and where now are the platonists and the anti-platonists? Christ, on the contrary,

is still living among us. There are still people who love Him and who hate Him. There is a passion for the love of Christ and a passion for His destruction. The fury of so many against Him is a proof that He is not dead."*

How shall we explain this power of the man who died on Calvary? What was it that made him greater than the death he died there, and greater than many apparent burials of his influence in the course of history from which that influence has come again in recurrent resurrections? To try to answer this, the most fascinating question in the realm of that mystery which enwraps the ultimate meaning of the thing we call a human soul, is the purpose of every book which deals with Jesus.

*_Life of Christ_, by Giovanni Papini, trans. by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, 1923, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

INTERPRETATIONS OF JESUS

Sometimes the attempted explanation of the significance of Jesus is simply a re-expression of the thoughts which long ago the Christian Church put into its official creeds. In form, that explanation seems to have a satisfying concreteness. Jesus has had an influence which seems super-human because he *was* super-human. He has brought to man the touch of the power of God because he himself was God come down to man. The marching rhythm of the Nicene Creed proclaims him "God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." Some of the most recent efforts to make the figure of Jesus vivid are simply expanded echoes of these words. Papini in his *Life of Christ** puts the old theology of Constantinople and Chalcedon into his rhapsodic modern prose. He invests the human figure of Jesus with the unearthly halo which he wears in the stained-glass windows of the churches. "Some years ago," he says, "the author of this book wrote another to describe the melancholy life of a man who wished for a

*Papini, p. 17.

moment to become God. Now in the maturity of his years and of his consciousness he has tried to write the life of a God Who made Himself man. . . . When all is said and done, Christ is an end and a beginning, an abyss of divine mystery between two divisions of human history."* In the same fashion writes Chesterton in *The Everlasting Man.* The Christian gospel, he says, proclaims that the "mysterious maker of the world has visited his world in person. It declares that really and even recently, or right in the middle of historic times, there did walk into the world this original, invisible being; about whom the thinkers make theories and the mythologists hand down myths, the Man Who Made the World. . . . That the Creator was present at scenes a little subsequent to the supper-parties of Horace, and talked with tax-collectors and government officials in the detached daily life of the Roman Empire, and that this fact continued to be firmly asserted by the whole of that great civilization for more than a thousand years—that is something utterly unlike anything else in nature"; but that also, Chesterton maintains, is nevertheless precisely the essence of the Christian gospel.†

Now it is not wholly accidental that in these two estimates, conceived by two men of different nations but of the same point of view, there should occur these similar, suggestive words, "mystery" and "mysteri-

*Papini, p. 5.
†*The Everlasting Man,* by Gilbert K. Chesterton, 1925, pp. 334-5.

ous." To Chesterton, the life of Jesus is a visitation to this earth in person of the "mysterious maker of the world": to Papini this same life is "an abyss of divine mystery between two divisions of human history." Certainly there is an element in both suggestions which is impressively true. The life of Jesus does involve a mystery, in the sense that depths are there which no glib explanation can exhaust. But the insatiable hunger of the human spirit to assimilate the meaning of the life of Jesus into its own experience will forever make men unwilling to leave in the dim and undifferentiated region of "the mysterious" truths which a braver exploration might at least in part make clear. There is a kind of apparent reverence which does not in fact fulfil the ends of God. The prophet Ezekiel beheld in a vision the awful majesty of God—"and when I saw it, I fell upon my face."* But to the prophet then there came "a voice of one that spake. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee."† So before the contemplation of the life of Jesus, it is necessary that men stand upon their feet—reverent, as befits those who contemplate any august greatness, but open-eyed, and confident that the scrutiny of an unafraid intelligence and a straight desire will not go unrewarded. The "abyss of mystery" is not the dreadful darkness of some unapproachable temple before which men are to veil their faces; it is rather like the abyss of vastness

*Ezek. 1:28. †Ezek. 2:1.

between the stars, where, in the kindling spaces, the watching eyes will see new lights dawn forever beyond the utmost they had seen before.

The great theologians have always perceived this living quality of the mystery that is in Christ. They have understood that the supreme truth is never expressed by a definition, but rather by a suggestion which leads the imagination on to explore a reality infinitely rich and various. The words which would represent religious experience must be symbols, not circumscriptions, signals on the mountains, not warnings at a gate. And the trouble with much present orthodox writing about Jesus is that it does not appreciate how subtle and far-reaching the "mystery" of Jesus may be. It has let that mystery be enclosed in sterile concepts, which at first appearance sound definite and satisfying, but only because these have cramped spiritual fact into phrases of formalized concreteness. The concept of Jesus as incarnate God is an attempt to translate a spiritual intuition which, like the perfume of a flower, escapes from any forms or phrases too stiffly pressed. Whether they agree or do not agree with the theology of the Christian creeds, men can appreciate the grandeur of the conviction which struggled for expression there, namely, that in Jesus there came into the realm of human experience a spiritual force of such beauty and such power that the only language which those who have felt it can find adequate is to call it "very God." But in sermons

and pronouncements of ecclesiastics, and even in books by writers usually brilliant and incisive, there is a representation of Jesus which resembles curiously the gods-come-down-to-earth of ancient Greece. The message of the gospels is made to sound like the tales of Homer. Jesus descended from Olympus is a god who wears the disguise of a man, but carries within his own consciousness an Olympian alienation from the real essence of humanity. "The mystery" of Jesus, because it was treated like a delphic riddle, an unexplained and empty darkness, to be represented only by a phrase, has refused to remain empty—as all realms into which the living religious interpretation ought to venture do refuse; and out of the silence has issued something very like a superstition. The mystery turns into a mythology, and the evidence that Jesus was God is presented chiefly in the fashion of a miraculous unlikeness to the human life he seemed to share. But this is to flinch before the real and more challenging mystery. That mystery lies deep in the fact that somehow God and man must be made at one, and that the religious meaning of the life of Jesus is neither understood nor appropriated until that which made men call him God is found to lie not in the dimness of an unintelligible difference, but in something which, by partial gleams at best, is explicable in the most native awareness of the human mind and soul.

It is not surprising that the kind of treatment of the life of Jesus which magnifies the supernatural and

the recondite should have provoked a reaction. Jewish commentators have written of him as though he were simply another Jewish teacher, and not in every respect the greatest. Says the learned Joseph Klausner of Jerusalem:* "To the Jewish nation Jesus can be neither God nor the Son of God, in the sense conveyed by belief in the Trinity. Either conception is to the Jew not only impious and blasphemous, but incomprehensible. Neither can he, to the Jewish nation, be the Messiah: the kingdom of heaven (the 'Days of the Messiah') is not yet come. Neither can they regard him as a Prophet: he lacks the Prophet's political perception and the Prophet's spirit of national consolation in the political-national sense."

And in addition to the reserved comments of Jewish interpreters, and to the varying critical estimates of weighty writers like Holtzmann, or Schmiedel, or Warschauer, there has appeared of late another class of writings which describe him with a jaunty familiarity, as though most of the amazement of his career could be brushed aside, and what is left of it boxed up in a few neat and easy classifications. These books have no intrinsic value to make them worth discussing; but they are types of that tinselled plausibility which can arrest a temporary popular attention and mislead popular thought. In one such book, Jesus has been called "A small Town Man,"† and it has been argued

**Jesus of Nazareth,* by Joseph Klausner, trans. by Herbert Danby, 1927, p. 413.

†By Mary Austin.

that since he was born in a small town, he must have had a small-town mind. Those acts of his and those elements in his teaching which do not suit our modern categories are to be ascribed to his unfortunate but inevitable limitations. It is true that a glance at history here and there might have damaged the confidence of the small-town, small-mind theory. Martin Luther might have presented some difficulties of assimilation to it, or Ignatius Loyola, or William Shakespeare, or Napoleon Bonaparte, or Abraham Lincoln; but nevertheless it is written, and very probably a certain number of readers have nodded their heads with satisfaction as they read, that because of his provincial origin Jesus need not be taken over-seriously. So also a writer who gives to his book the blandly assured title of *The Man Himself,** has presented Jesus simply as "the young rabbi." "The young rabbi . . . in his own estimation was what our newspapers call a 'miracle man,' and he intended that onlookers should regard him as such." "The young rabbi who became a strolling prophet" had an opportunity to say various things which he regrettably did not say; and various beliefs of his and various things which he did say "show how Jewish he was, how provincial, how handicapped." But the attempt to explain the significance of Jesus by demonstrating that most of him was not significant at all is too perversely silly to persuade intelligence. Not through any method of trying to reduce the meaning

*By Rollin Lynde Hartt, 1923, p. 24.

of Jesus to a flattering similarity to our own average measurements does one arrive at the truth.

Nor is the rounded truth presented in that very different picture which has received its curious popular welcome, *The Man Nobody Knows.** Its colors are laid on with the broad strokes of the advertising copywriter, but it glows with a man's genuine admiration for the manliness of Jesus. "Read that, oh men, and bow your heads" its message ends. "You have let yourself picture him as weak, as a man of sorrows, uninspiring, glad to die. There have been leaders who could call forth enthusiasm when their fortunes ran high. But he when his enemies had done their worst, so bore himself that a crucified felon looked into his dying eyes and saluted him as king." That represents at least a wholesome revolt from the stereotyped formalisms of the supposed more orthodox and proper theologies, with their stiff, remote and Byzantine Christ. The book has set out to tell "the grandest achievement story of all."† "If, in so doing," its author says, "we are criticised for over-emphasizing the human side of his character we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that our over-emphasis tends a little to offset the very great over-emphasis which has been exerted on the other side." Such a counter-weight in the balances is of value for the evenness of truth; yet it needs to be remembered, especially by our generation

*_The Man Nobody Knows,_ by Bruce Barton, 1925, p. 220.
†Barton, p. 9.

with its proneness for plausible and partial thinking, that it *is* a counter-weight and not completeness. Jesus is still "The Man Nobody Knows" in a deeper sense than that which the book of that name suggests. He was something more than the prototype of a very admirable and brilliant modern business man who should conceive a passion for religion and its propagation. Something more must be said than that—"This was his message—a happy God wanting His sons and daughters to be happy."* Room must be made in the picture of Jesus for the mightier mysteries —not in the sense that he himself becomes a recondite, locked room of mystery, but in the sense that he becomes the door through which all human souls may pass into a deeper consciousness of the mystery of life and of those infinities which brood above it. Even the best of our modern efforts to explain Jesus with a highly-lighted moving-picture brightness, are in danger of forgetting that there are some facts so great that none can understand them save those who bring to their contemplation the deep gaze of quietness and awe. We must beware lest our attempts to understand the significance of Jesus should result in nothing further than what Evelyn Underhill has called "a shallow religiousness, the tendency to be content with a bright ethical piety wrongly called practical Christianity, a nice brightly-varnished this-world faith. . . . We are drifting toward a religion which consciously

*Barton, p. 75.

or unconsciously keeps its eye on humanity rather than on Deity—which lays all the stress on service and hardly any of the stress on awe: and that is a type of religion which in practice does not wear well. It does little for the soul in those awful moments when the pain and mystery of life are most deeply felt. . . . It turns its back on the most profound gifts made by Christianity to the human race."*

Three other recent books bear witness to the endless fascination of the secret of Jesus, and to the diverse ways along which men may move in their attempts to understand it. Henri Barbusse, in his *Jésus,* has projected a character out of his own imagination, sometimes with flashes of brilliant intuition, but more often with fantastic distortion. Professor Shirley Jackson Case, in his *Jesus, a New Biography,* has been the scene-painter rather than the dramatist. Vividly he has reconstructed the crowded and colorful background of Jesus' life; but the uncertain and circumscribed figure whom he leads before that background is not the Jesus who has gripped the imagination of the centuries. J. Middleton Murry, in his *Jesus, Man of Genius,* has come nearer than any other recent writer to presenting a conception worthy of the greatness of that which he seeks to explain. For to speak of "genius" is to suggest at once that flowering of the spirit which goes beyond all casual measurements. Genius touches the commonplaces of our human life, but it touches also

**Concerning the Inner Life,* by Evelyn Underhill, 1926, pp. 6, 7.

the infinite vistas which lead up and on to God. It builds a bridge between those things which we sunder in our thought as human and divine. The theatre of genius is here in the midst of our material existence, and out of the clay of our least regarded and most cheaply counted facts it transmutes its gold. But not from out of our material existence does it seem to have arisen. It comes from the hidden distances. It bloweth where it listeth, like the wind. It is free and spacious, with that boundlessness which belongs alone to God.

CHAPTER III

THE GENIUS OF JESUS

"A MAN of genius," therefore, Jesus was. But the attempt to understand him must press farther into the suggestion of that word as it applies to him. The great commander of armies may be a genius. The builder of empires, or the creator of some vast industrial enterprise, may be a genius. He perceives in a flash of intuition that toward which other men slowly grope. He grasps and uses those dawning factors of reality which others have not seen and therefore cannot take account of. All genius has in it the quality of poetry —a winged freedom which soars above the rigid fences of ordinary calculation as though these did not exist. But the scope and quality of genius may differ as the range of the eagle differs from the swallow's. There may be a genius whose perspective has in it the wideness of the heavens. It may comprehend not segments of men's interests only, but existence as a whole, in its infinite relationships. It will exercise over human life the highest mastery, because it brings to life the poetry of its divinely rounded understanding. Such was the genius of Jesus—the genius of the supreme poet of

the life of man in its relationship to God, and of God in relationship to man.*

It is possible for that word poet to be misunderstood. There are those to whom it may suggest only some shallow, tinkling thing. It may even seem as though it depicted Jesus as a dreamer of pretty, but futile, dreams. But above all such thin imaginings, the massive meaning of the word climbs up in its majestic fact. Always the true poet has been he who by some mystic gift from the Eternal sees into the heart of things; and the utmost poet is he who with unshadowed eyes sees into the heart of God.

For the poet is not primarily a rhymester, nor of necessity a maker of literature at all. That which he may write may show him to be a poet; it does not make him such. The essence of all poethood is a deeper and more primal thing than any written form. It is a living well of beauty and of understanding which may flow, like a river, in one or in another channel. The inner music of the poet's soul is greater than all song. It may be that the poet will never cast his message into meticulous cadences nor into any formal phrase. His message may be too mighty to be limited by these. The soul which is empty of all poetry will be silent because it is too shallow to have anything to say; but the profoundest soul of all may seem often to be silent

*This book was written, and set up in type, before I had heard of the existence of William Ellery Leonard's *The Poet of Galilee*, recently issued in a new edition long after its original publication years ago—a beautiful expression, in a brief study of Jesus, of the conception which quite independently I have woven into the introduction to this longer book.—W. R. B.

because the wave-lengths of its vast perceptions are too deep to be translated into sound. Thus it could be true that he who wrote no line of poetry was yet a mightier poet than the poets of all time. Words, for him, were only a partial instrument, vibrant—as in his parables—with beauty, but only with hinting echoes of the immense symphony of his soul. The language of his art was life. He was the supreme poet because he saw with clearer vision, felt with more exquisite understanding, and could interpret with surer certainty than any other, the beauty and the mystery of life and man and God.

"Many people suppose," wrote William Hazlitt,* "that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables, with like endings; but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower—*there* is poetry, in its birth. If history is a grave study, poetry may be said to be a graver: its materials lie deeper and are spread wider. . . . It is not a branch of authorship: it is 'the stuff of which our life is made.' The rest is mere oblivion, a dead letter: for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it. Fear is poetry, hope is poetry, love is poetry. . . . Poetry is that fine particle within us that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being: without it, 'man's life is poor as beast's.' "

**Lectures on the English Poets,* by William Hazlitt, London, 1841, pp. 2, 3.

It is characteristic of poetry always that it suggests more than it can say. It leads imagination on—as modern science does—both into the infinitely little and into the infinitely large. It reveals the complex wonder of the least and subtlest of the things which cast their atom's-weight into the invisible balances of human laughter and of human tears—the petal of a rose, the scent of apple-blossoms in an April orchard, the questions of a child, the look in wistful eyes. It opens vistas also into the unfathomable spaces which lie around us and above us, sown with the star-dust of elemental mystery slowly swinging into the constellations of some steady-burning truth. Always the message of poetry must be fleeting as a rainbow, swift as the flash of a soaring bird. It cannot be caught in the hot hands of a heavy literalism. It cannot tarry for those who would imprison it in the pitiful cages of their wooden prose. It touches the dust, and glorifies it, but it will not dwell there. It leads into the far spaces of imagination and desire, and upon those mighty journeys to which the soul of poetry leads, only those can go who have tried to cast off the heaviness of their own minds and souls. That is why the meaning of Jesus has so often escaped many of those who have presumed to be his interpreters. They have tried to treat his illimitable spirit as though it were a cart-horse meant to be harnessed between the shafts of their dull ideas. They have tried to put aspiration into arithmetic, and to catch vision between the vise-

like exactitudes of an iron interpretation of their creeds. All creeds and theologies can be valuable only as symbols,—arrows of suggestion blazing the golden pathways of their signalling into those still distances where articulation cannot go. It is when men forget this that creeds and theologies become, as sometimes they lamentably do, dead forms out of which all the lovely vividness of Christ has gone. We lose him when too stubbornly we define him. We follow him and find him best when we remember that in what he said, and in what has been said about him, there are beckonings of poetry which we can more easily feel and live by than we, or others, ever can put into words.

There is another characteristic of all poetry—not only of the poetry of words, but of that deeper poetry which gathers all the concrete reality of our daily living into its interpretation. Poetry reveals, as we have seen, the haunting wealth of beauty which may lie in the single elements of our perception or our thought. But that is not all. It binds these into a whole which is greater than its parts. It links them into a rhythm full of transcendent music. We are familiar with this in the masterpieces of our written literature. Turn to the noblest passages of Shakespeare, or to the immortal lyrics of Wordsworth or Shelley or of Keats. Most of their lines are made up of ordinary words, the same words which might enter into the trivial and careless conversation of men and women talking nothing but the hackneyed commonplaces of the routine day.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded Time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death,"*

wrote Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. But what words did he use there which one by one, and unregarded, would seem to have any magic in them? Day to day, to-morrow, yesterday, fools, lighted, dusty—what words are here that might not come as easily to the lips of the plodding clerk, or the street-sweeper, or the stoker before his furnace grate? Yet out of their homely syllables the touch of poetry has brought a music like the pealing of great bells. Nor is it a music which sounds for the ear alone; it echoes down deep corridors of the human soul, with its vast suggestions of a timelessness which enfolds the petty moments of our time, and of a sublimity to which somehow our little lives belong. So it was with the greater and more far-reaching poetry of Jesus. He took the homely elements of life as a poet takes the homely syllables of language, and set them to the march of far-off cadences. The sowing of seed, the kneading of leaven, the giving of a cup of water to a child, work and rest, the round of daily human service and the patient eagerness of human hearts—all these fell into place, like notes within a symphony, before the motif of his message of a Kingdom of God made real upon the earth. Even the

*_Macbeth_, Act V, Scene 5.

darker and more intractable elements were swept into the unity of his great conception. Evil, hate, agony, a cross, were passing discords mastered by a more majestic theme. Life and death and man's immortal destiny were one. Through them all there throbbed the grandeur of the steady purposes of God.

Is it not for something such as this that the religious instinct is forever crying out? Men want to find the beauty of a holiness, and the strength of an unfailing love, which can take the poor, haphazard thing life often seems to be, and lift it to nobility. So much of it is sprawling and disconnected, broken into petty aims and fitful purposes, beginning nowhere and moving on to the beat of no unfaltering certainties. And so much of it seems evil,—with its defections, its defeats, its desolations. It is old, dull prose, plodding heavy-footed in the dust of commonness, when what we want is a poetry of the spirit to come to us with the lift of majestic wings. And then the thought begins to dawn,—what if through the windows of our need we are led to recognize that which is the very reality of God? If the hunger of life for a divine fulfilment has an answer, must not the answer be that there is One before whose touch disjointed things attain their unity, and things which in themselves seem small and mean begin to fit into a cadence which is great and high? Then in truth the Master must be the Man who understands. Then the Son of God is he who brings to life that poetry of its authentic meaning by which again it is attuned to God.

PART II

THE LIFE OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

THE ENVIRONMENT OF JESUS' BOYHOOD

The primary sources of information concerning the life of Jesus are the four brief narratives which the New Testament calls the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Of these the earliest is the gospel of Mark, written—or so at least careful and weighty scholars believe—about 65 A. D. There is very early Christian tradition that the writer of this gospel was John Mark, a young man of Jerusalem who may possibly have seen Jesus himself, though he was not of the company of the close disciples. According to the Book of Acts,* the house of John Mark's mother was a meeting-place for the first Christian fellowship in Jerusalem, and to that house, as a familiar visitor, came Simon Peter, the most conspicuous figure among the group whom Jesus had first drawn about himself. When Saul of Tarsus, converted now to be Paul the Apostle, started on his first missionary journey, John Mark was one of his companions;† later Mark went with Barnabas,‡ and later still was with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome.§ According to the First Epistle of Peter,¶ Mark would appear to have been in

*Acts 12:12 ff. †Acts 12:25, 13:13. ‡Acts 15:39.
§II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24. ¶I Peter 5:13.

Rome with Peter also; and Eusebius, who in 325 wrote a history of the Christian Church on the basis of much earlier writings,—some of which still exist and some of which are lost—gives one very early and valuable record. He quotes from the writings of Papias, who was Bishop of Hierapolis in the early part of the second century. Papias tells that "the Presbyter" (who according to another reference may have been the Elder John) said: "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ." Then Papias goes on, "For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely."* It may reasonably be believed, therefore, that Mark conveys reflection of first-hand memories of what Jesus did and said, and of the beliefs about him in that circle which followed him first.

Still earlier than Mark—as early as 50 A. D., some eighteen or twenty years after Jesus' crucifixion—Paul, the Christian convert and missionary, had begun to

*"The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church." Second series, volume I, *The Church History of Eusebius,* translated by Arthur C. McGiffert and E. C. Richardson, 1890, p. 172.

write his letters to the newly-founded congregations of Christian believers here and there in the Roman world. Paul had not been a disciple in Jesus' lifetime; but he was in touch with men who had been. He knew what the Christian group counted as vital in the remembered story of Jesus' life.

Mark's gospel is a brief, but vivid and on the whole consistent, picture of Jesus from the time when he appeared in public until his crucifixion. Mark makes no reference whatever to the circumstances of Jesus' birth, nor does Paul. The only inference is that neither the first historian, nor the greatest of the early missionaries and preachers, had in his mind anything concerning the birth of Jesus which seemed to him an essential part of what he wanted people to know and understand.

Next in order of time after the gospel of Mark come the gospels of Luke and of Matthew, written, as nearly as can be determined, about the year 85 A. D., with Luke probably a few years the earlier of the two. Neither of these gospels in its final form is the work of a personal disciple of Jesus. Both of them embody materials drawn from various sources, including the gospel of Mark, which is almost completely re-incorporated in Matthew, and largely also in Luke. They draw also upon what was evidently a collection of Jesus' sayings, which had been gathered in the Christian community. And they use some other special materials of their own, part of which, especially in the

gospel of Luke, is of early origin and of great importance, being drawn,—according to so able a scholar as Canon Streeter of Oxford,—from the traditions current in the pivotal churches of Cæsarea, Antioch, and Rome.*

Unlike the gospel of Mark, which commences with Jesus' public ministry, the gospels of Luke and Matthew begin with accounts of Jesus' birth, the definite sources of which it is impossible to trace.

They tell of a maiden of Nazareth who was betrothed to a man named Joseph. To Mary comes the Angel Gabriel, bringing to her the message that there shall be miraculously born of her a child who shall be "the Son of the Most High." Mary and Joseph are in Bethlehem—or, according to Luke, they go there because of the Roman census,—and there in Bethlehem, the town of David, Jesus who is to be the promised Redeemer is born. Angels sing his glory in the skies. Shepherds watching their flocks in the fields see and hear the heavenly sign, and come to Bethlehem to worship the child. "Wise-men from the east," watchers of the stars, see a new star dawning in the sky and follow it on to Bethlehem, where they too, like the shepherds, worship at the feet of Jesus. Then, according to Luke, Jesus is carried back by Mary and Joseph to Nazareth in Galilee, after having been presented in the temple at Jerusalem in obedience to Jewish law: according to Matthew, they flee into Egypt, from per-

**The Four Gospels,* by B. H. Streeter, 1925, p. 234.

secution by Herod the king, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my Son,"—and only after two years did they come at length to Nazareth.

But it is plain that these narratives of the birth, in Luke and Matthew, represent a later stage of thought and belief about the life of Jesus than the letters of Paul or the gospel of Mark. They read not so much like plain, objective history as like a lyric effort to account for history. By the year 85, and before that time, Jesus had become in the experience of his followers so unexampled an influence that no tradition seemed too glowing to be appropriate. It was easy for worship to sing as it thought of him—to sing of an angelic annunciation, to sing of the kind of birth of the Deliverer which the Greek world into which Christianity was now going would understand; to sing of adoring magi following the beacon of their marching star. When these traditions began to echo through the Christian fellowship, there is no doubt that the evangelists believed them. There is no doubt either that as symbols of the spiritual significance of Jesus they carry an immortal truth. But when we ask whether they are materials which help us historically to understand the mind of Jesus, and the contemporary facts which determined his life and work, then that is another matter.

For what we want *most* to know is not what Chris-

tian adoration could come to think of Jesus, but what Jesus thought of himself. What was it that interested him? What was the basis of that relationship with God which his own conviction was concerned with? When we ask these questions we recognize that there is no valid historical evidence in the earliest Christian writings that Jesus thought of himself as having been miraculously born. There is no evidence that his family thought so. The opening chapters of Luke and Matthew are like a prologue spoken in the high rhapsody of the Church's interpretation; but the history which we can be sure of begins against a different background. It begins not in Bethlehem but in Nazareth, and among neighbors who regarded him as having been born and brought up as one of themselves.

Nazareth lies in the north of Palestine. The whole country which was the ground of the history of the Jewish nation and the scene of the life of Jesus is a tiny spot on the map of the world,—or on the map of the Roman Empire. It stretches only some hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and its width from the Mediterranean to the valley of the Jordan river narrows from sixty miles in the south to hardly more than forty in the upper reaches of the river. But even in so small a country there were marked differences in the people. About nine hundred years before the time of Jesus, the united kingdom which David and Solomon had built up was broken in two by a great rebellion; and the weakness of this division made the

whole country a more certain prey to the disasters which now began. The peculiar position of the Israelitish territory between the sea and desert, on the crossroads of the necessary routes of commerce from Egypt to Damascus and from the coast into the heart of Asia, doomed it inescapably to be a battleground. In the eighth century, B. C., one invading conqueror after another from the great empires of Assyria and Babylon had led his destroying armies into Palestine. The northern provinces, being first in the path of their advance, suffered most heavily. Thousands of the Jewish inhabitants were carried away captive into the east, and alien colonists from the invading empires settled in their places. Judæa also was overthrown, but never so desolated as the north. In the sixth and fifth centuries, B. C., many descendants of the exiles returned to their homelands, both into the south and into the north. Under the pressure of common suffering, the Jews were united again into one people, cherishing with passionate intensity a racial and religious unity. Round the temple which was rebuilt at Jerusalem the worship of the whole people centred. But the conditions of life in south and north were not altogether similar. It was into the north that the longer infusion of foreign folk had come, and it was there also that the more important cities of the infiltrating Roman civilization were being built. "Galilee of the Gentiles" was the name given scornfully by Jews of other regions to the province where Jesus was born; and though this

name was in much of its suggestion untrue, and though Galilee in its prevailing spirit was Jewish with a fierce and fervent loyalty, nevertheless its history and its aspect did arouse associations which went beyond the bounds of any single race. An environment which spoke not only of Israel but also of a larger and more complex world surrounded Jesus as he grew.

Among the hills of Galilee Nazareth lay, a little village; and in Nazareth life was very simple. Men and women went about their homely tasks in the flat-roofed houses and in the uneven streets of their small village, or in the fields of the narrow valley, and the vineyards which climbed the hills. Women drew water at the village well, kneaded dough and made bread, wove cloth and made it into clothes, swept and cleaned the houses, and went about the same routine tasks which in any other place and time women might be doing. Men tilled the fields and sowed the seed, cultivated the grapes in the vineyard, tended the sheep on the hills: or here and there in the village a carpenter made yokes and ploughs, and shaped the beams for houses. This was the work that Jesus grew to know. "Is not this the carpenter?" said his neighbors of Nazareth at a later time—"the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"* The gospel of Luke has the question in another form: "Is not this Joseph's son?"† But Joseph does not appear in the adult life

*Mark 6:3. †Luke 4:22.

of Jesus. The inference is that he had died when Jesus was a boy; and on the shoulders of the boy as he grew to manhood had rested more than a boy's responsibility in the household to which he belonged.

But Nazareth, notwithstanding that it was small and that it lay secluded, was not without its wide horizons. Toward those horizons the eyes might sweep far distances, and the imagination might go on ways more distant still. About the valley on the slope of which the village lies, on three sides stand the hills. It is an easy climb from Nazareth to the top of these. From these hills unfolds a panorama of varied and extraordinary beauty. In its great contours, it may be seen to-day of course exactly as the eyes of Jesus saw it; but one who looks upon it now will need in imagination to rebuild razed stones into living cities and to fill the roads with more vivid pageantry if he would see what Jesus saw. On the north and west and south the hills girdle the valley; in the southeast and east they dip down to the plain. It is the Plain of Esdrælon to which they open, most fertile of all the regions of Palestine, stretching green and gentle from the Jordan river to the sea; but to the eyes of Jesus the plain must have suggested something else than cultivation. For it had been an age-long battle-ground, and the soil of it had drunk the blood of men from many nations. Over its wheat-fields chariots of Assyria had rolled; there the armies of the Philistines had marched to their collision with the armies of Saul; and in the even re-

moter years, Gideon and other far-off heroes had struggled with the dark tribes which swept in from the deserts of the east. To the northwest, the long ridge of Carmel juts into the sea—clothed for Jesus with its memories of Elijah, first of the mighty succession of the prophets, who struggled there with Ahab and the priests of Baal. To the north, filling the sky-line, rises the majestic peak of Hermon, with three thousand feet of its upper slopes gleaming white with snow. To the east, the eyes of Jesus saw—as one may see to-day—the edges of the Jordan valley, and beyond, a range of hills, leading up and on to the scarred and rocky heights of Gilead and of Moab: but also he could see, when the morning sunlight shone upon their marble, the Græco-Roman cities of the Decapolis, builded in new splendor there high upon the hills to the east of the Jordan, with their amphitheatres and temples where now are crumbled stones. Or if at evening he climbed the heights from Nazareth, he could see the sun go down into the flaming Mediterranean spread wide before him to the west; and through the golden pathways of the sunset he might see the distant sails of Roman triremes bringing the legionaries to the cities of the coast. Far sweep of history, and the wideness of his present world, were alike suggested by those vistas which lay beneath his gaze.

The Galilee of Jesus' time was a conquered province, but it was part of a stirring and colorful civilization. The population of Palestine was far greater then

than it is now. The march of Alexander the Great into the east had brought Greek culture in his train; the firm rule of Rome had brought the order and stability under which material prosperity flourished. There were great cities in Galilee. Only an hour's walk to the north of Nazareth stood Sepphoris, which had been partially destroyed by the Romans as punishment for a rebellion about the time of Jesus' birth, but which during the period of his boyhood was so magnificently rebuilt by Herod Antipas for his royal residence that it was called the "ornament of all Galilee." Fifteen or twenty miles to the east lay the beautiful lake called the Sea of Galilee, and villagers of Nazareth travelling thither would pass the shores where the fishing boats came in with the haul of their nets, or go on into the streets of the large and populous towns which bordered this inland water. There in these lake cities, and on the roads, might be seen the signs of the wider civilization to which Nazareth so inconspicuously belonged: merchants from distant places, caravans going toward or coming from the east, now and then a Roman legion, with its eagles glinting in the sunlight, marching southward from Acre on the sea-coast toward Jerusalem. When the boy Jesus went, as unquestionably he must have done, with some of his neighbors to Sepphoris, or to the cities of the lake, he could come back to Nazareth with ampler pictures and more stirring themes on which to think.

In Galilee, thus, one could scarcely avoid familiar

contact with Gentiles and with the facts of the Gentile world. Yet this did not make the Jews necessarily less devoted to their peculiar heritage. On the contrary, the very possibility of the assimilation of ideas and customs from the aliens made men and women who loved their own religion the more strict and particular in its observance. In a little village such as Nazareth, with the close pressure of its community sentiment, this would be the more apt to be true. In his own home the boy Jesus was taught the traditions of his fathers,—a teaching which with extraordinary faithfulness and regularity had before this time been established as part of Jewish family life; and he learned to repeat the proclamation of his people's faith, which began "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart."

In Nazareth also there was a synagogue; the local organization of the Jewish community which from the time of Ezra four centuries before, had become a matter of course in the towns of Palestine. The synagogue served the double function of church and school. There the minister of the synagogue taught the boys of the village to read the scriptures, and there the whole congregation gathered for worship. In the synagogue school Jesus gained that mastery of the Old Testament which was to become so significant for his later life and work, and on the Sabbath, the synagogue worship brought to his spirit its immemorial suggestions of Israel's agelong search for God.

To the Jewish nation generally, religion was an intense concern. No other people of the world had ever turned so great a measure of thought and interest toward religious things. The whole history and literature of the nation was the story of their religion; their supreme books the books which composed their Bible. The heroes of their tradition without exception were men who were believed to have walked with God. The foundation of the nation was traced back to Abraham, and it was written in the book of Genesis that with him and his descendants God had made an everlasting covenant; the deliverance of the nation from slavery in Egypt was ascribed to Moses, appointed by God as the deliverer of His people; and the Hero-King whose memory was held most glamorous was David, "a man after God's own heart." This religion of Israel had been a long, slow growth. It had embodied at different periods much superstition common to all the Semitic peoples, to whom the Jews belonged. There had been ignorant ideas and primitive, savage practices, maintained in the name of God. But in spite of partial crudities, the total fact is unmistakable that this people was passionately in search of a Reality which lies beyond appearance, and that they believed this Reality had spoken to them with authentic voice. They worshipped a living God, and they held their life accountable to Him.

This consciousness of God, and this sense that to Him they were accountable, permeated the every-day thought and life of the Jews with an impressive thor-

oughness. The heart of the sacred writings which were read in the synagogue and taught indefatigably to the people was "the law." The law consisted not only of the Ten Commandments, but of a wide-ranging code which governed moral, social and ritual conduct,—all made sacred and authoritative under the great name of Moses. After the destruction of the Kingdom by Assyria and Babylon, and after the exile and captivity, the Jews who came back at length into their own land set up the law again with a zeal made all the more ardent because it had become now the badge of their national distinctness and the symbol of their faith in the favor of God which no calamities could ultimately destroy. They believed that if they kept the law God would vindicate their conviction that they were the divinely chosen people. The great prayer which increasingly became the prayer of all the nation began—"Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the great God, the mighty and tremendous, the Most High God, who bestowest gracious favors and createst all things, and rememberest the piety of the patriarchs," and it went on to declare, "Thou art good for Thy mercies fail not, and compassionate for Thy loving kindness never ceaseth; our hopes are forever in Thee . . . Praised be Thou, Lord, for Thou blessest Thy people Israel with salvation."

Growing up in a home and in a community where

these conceptions of Israel and of Israel's God prevailed, Jesus was aware of them as soon as he was old enough to think. The average person in Nazareth—like the average person in any other town—was aware of these same things, and did not think. But Jesus did. If one thing is certain from the pictures which the gospels later give of him, it is that he was not of the kind who accept ideas conventionally, with no stirring of imagination in response. He had the swift perception which sees the new suggestions in old truth. What were the deeper meanings of this belief that Israel had been chosen for an immortal destiny? What would the salvation of God be, and how would it come about? He was beginning to ask himself such questions as these; and to blaze his own ways toward an answer.

The time came when he went on a journey from Nazareth which was memorable. The gospel of Luke tells how he went up to Jerusalem for his first participation in the Passover. Even if this one gospel had not recorded the incident, the general fact of it could in any case have been inferred. It was established in the Jewish law and custom that every boy when he reached the threshold of his maturity should become subject to a man's religious duties, and these included attendance at the great religious feasts. So the year came for Jesus when for the first time he was to share in the most solemn and sacred religious institution of his people. Luke says that he went up to Jerusalem with his

father and mother and the neighbors from Nazareth.

This progress to the Holy City at the season of Passover was an experience well fitted to stir the deeps in any sensitive spirit. Huge multitudes were streaming that way from every quarter. Friends from the same village or town went together, camping at night by the way. They would sing together the ancient songs which pilgrims for centuries had sung on that same road:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."*

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.

"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

"Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."†

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever.

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever."‡

The road from Nazareth struck across the plain of Esdrælon to the Jordan valley, then down the river to the neighborhood of Jericho, from which it turned to the west to climb the steep hill-country that rose from the river toward Jerusalem. At the end it reached the crest of Olivet; and there across a narrow intervening valley, crowning the hill of Zion, the towers of Jerusalem and the white parapets of the magnifi-

*Psalms 121:1, A. V.
†Psalms 122:1-4, A. V.
‡Psalms 125:1, A. V.

cent temple which had been built anew by Herod the Great, rose against the sky.

If it could be said of London

> "Dull would he be of sight who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty"

so also could it have been said of Jerusalem; and this not mainly because of its situation and the beauty of the temple, but more because of the associations which clothed it as with a royal garment in the eyes of every Israelitish man and boy. There, a thousand years before, David, the most romantic of the kings of Israel, had built his capital. There Isaiah the prophet had lived and spoken his words of counsel in perilous times. Assyrian armies had besieged it; conquerors from Babylon had ultimately overthrown it; a people returning long years afterward from exile, with inextinguishable devotion, had rebuilt it. It mingled in its history glory and tragedy, exaltation and defeat. And the memory of all this must have been with Jesus as he came for the first time into its streets.

One place in Jerusalem drew him most,—and naturally, because it was the symbol of the overshadowing interest which has made Jerusalem great. That was the temple. He would have gone there in any case, with all the rest of the company from Nazareth, for the ritual that preceded the keeping of the Passover. But according to the tradition preserved in Luke's gospel, he went again. He wanted to hear the religious

teachers who met there in the temple courts for their discussions. Luke tells that when the Passover was over, and the group from Nazareth had started home, Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not with them. They went back into Jerusalem to look for him, and it was in the temple that they found him, "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."*

It may well be that they were. Jesus of Nazareth was a boy in years, but boys mature early in that eastern country. And the mind and spirit which were maturing in him were of a quality which neither these nor any other teachers in Jerusalem had encountered before. His questions searched to the heart of their knowledge of that which was his surpassing interest, and which he took for granted to be theirs. What did they know of God, and of God's purpose for the people? That was what he wanted to hear them tell.

*Luke 2:46-7.

CHAPTER II

THE THOUGHTS AND PASSIONS OF THE TIME

Upon the years which followed, from the time of Jesus' first Passover in Jerusalem until the time when he came out of Nazareth into the public gaze, not a single sentence in the gospels casts any definite light. Not one incident from his life and not one word from his lips have come down from those hidden years. We are left to conjecture what was going on in Jesus' thought and purpose. And yet the conjecture is not blind. We know what Jesus was like at the time when our knowledge of him does begin; and what he was then, he had been becoming in the years before. Back of the figure which appears in the gospels stands the Jesus who in quiet Nazareth had been making ready for his destiny. The gospels show the conclusions at which Jesus had arrived concerning the great questions on which his life would turn. From abundant history, we know what the ideas were which were abroad in Israel—the ideas which Jesus had to take account of, and in relation to which much of his own thought had to be shaped. Knowing him therefore, and knowing the forces of his time, it is possible to infer with reasonable assurance what was happening

with him in the years before he comes fully into view.

Underneath everything else—under all his thoughts and judgments and under the work he was to do—lay these two certain facts. He loved God, and he loved human souls.

To say that he loved God is not to suggest a soft and easy sentiment. As a child of Israel, and heir of the religious instincts of its age-long worship, Jesus knew God as the exalted One—"the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy";* and when he thought of Him or spoke of Him, it was always with a reverent awe.

"Not to realize this," as Von Hügel has well said, "is to turn the Gospel of Jesus into a mere idyll."† Yet by "an overwhelming and daring paradox, claiming our utmost homage, He who is 'in heaven' is yet 'our Father' . . . That heavenly Being of marvel and mystery and awe is Himself the eternal, benignant, gracious will." It was this that Jesus was to teach; but first it was this which he himself in his own soul intimately and personally knew. To him, God was an ever-living and enfolding Presence. Metaphysical doctrines concerning the nature of Jesus, such as the great creeds of Christendom have travailed to embody, are the inescapable efforts of men's thought to relate this fact to their philosophy; but deeper than any philosophy, and more original, is the fact itself. The supreme

*Isaiah 57:15.

†*The Idea of the Holy*, by Rudolf Otto, trans. by John W. Harvey, 1924, p. 86.

experience of religion, which to other souls is fragmentary and fleeting, was to Jesus constant.

What this meant can be understood only by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. It is not possible to interpret God to those who imagine that he is only the conclusion of an argument; but if any man has opened his nature even so much as once to those strange intimations which seem to strike upon it from a Life that is greater than his own, then he has the key to the quality of that communion in which Jesus lived and moved. These intimations come in unpredictable ways, but when they come, they bring with them an inner sense of certainty which feels no longer the need of any other proof. The majesty of sunrise or the shining of the quiet stars may one day bring to the spirit a sudden sense of a Beauty high and cleansing, above all beauty of the earth. The voice of conscience speaking in the heart, or the sight of some heroic human deed, may lift existence clear above its common level, into touch with an authority which is convincingly divine. In such moments of emotion which no ordinary words can adequately frame, it is as though the bells within the spirit rang with an instinctive answer to a music sounding from the very heart of truth. After such moments, men know that they have felt God; and though often thenceforth they may walk in the valleys, they do not altogether lose remembrance of the far horizons that lie beyond the hills. Nor are they unable to imagine what life

must have meant for Jesus for whom this consciousness of God was not intermittent, but a steady light in which all things were bathed.

As he loved God, so also Jesus loved people. When at a later time he said to his disciples that all the law and the prophets were summed up in these two commandments: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself,*—he was passing on to them what he already had experienced. His relationship to God made him related to all his Father's sons. People appealed to him not only for what they were but for what they were not,—and might be. His attitude was not sentimental and undiscriminating. He saw men's faults, and helped them see them; but he saw also the promise in them which they had not begun to see. Instinctively he measured every institution of society and of religion, by this test,—what does it do for human souls? What does it do to bring men nearer God?

It was in the light of questions such as these that Jesus sifted out the eternal from the transient in the Old Testament religion, and dared presently to proclaim the difference.

Two influences had been at work through the long centuries of Israel's history. One was the spontaneous hunger of men's hearts for God, leading to great moments of immediate awareness. The other was the ef-

*Mark 12:30.

fort to reduce this living religious experience to a rule. One was the religion which found its thrilling utterance in the psalms and the prophets. The other was the religion of the law.

The growth of the law in Israel, and of its power over the thought of the people, was a long process, but one not hard to understand. Here was a people superbly in earnest about its religious life. "O God, thou art my God; earnestly will I seek thee," they had cried. "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and weary land, where no water is."* "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."† This intensity of religious aspiration was not in the main emotional or mystical. The Hebrew mind did not instinctively turn that way. It turned rather toward the practical ordering of life. It sought to know God's will because in that revelation it found the divine truth to keep men from actual false choices, and the divine holiness which could make them good. The great souls in Israel's history were among the supreme seers of all time in the realization that religious communion ought to show itself in finer character, and that worship of God ought to lead to godly works. No other nation of antiquity produced such geniuses in practical religion as the prophets. They not only laid hold upon the actual life of their generation and held this up as accountable to

*Psalms 63:1, 2. †Psalms 42:1, 2.

God, but they purified and ennobled the conception of the kind of God to whom life thus should be accountable. Elijah, eight hundred years before the time of Christ, had confronted kings with his intrepid message of God's convicting righteousness. "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice,"* said Amos. "Wash you, make you clean, . . . cease to do evil, learn to do well; relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,"† cried the great Isaiah. And Micah summed up religion thus, "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"‡ These men, and others of their spirit before and afterward, in the path-breaking power of their own inspiration, opened new roads of understanding into wide provinces of religious truth. Where they had pioneered, the people as a whole must be enabled to follow. Therefore the religious teachers of Israel set to work to mark with unmistakable indications these right paths for thought and conduct. They would make the discoveries of the seers and prophets into prescriptions for the people. At every doubtful turning of the moral road, they would set up a sign-post; and these sign-posts were—"the law."

Plainly, there could be a beautiful value in the law as the teachers of Israel ideally conceived it. It was the ordering of the nation's steps according to the will of

*Amos 5:15. †Isaiah 1:16.
‡Micah 6:8.

God. Men might be drawn to it not constrainedly, but gladly. And so, indeed, at times they were. The law, as the perfect rule of life, could even bring men singing through its gates. "His delight is in the law of the Lord,"* says the first psalm of the man who is blessed; and in other psalms the same note is struck. "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day."† "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path."‡

But gradually and inevitably the law began to lose touch with religious experience. It became an end in itself, instead of a means to the end of a larger life. The teachers of the law were no longer creators but rather commentators, bent upon conserving minutely what some one else had said and thought. After the captivity, when the exiles came home to rebuild Jerusalem and re-establish the nation, the whole mood of the people was one that turned back with a passionate devotion to the past. The great convictions of saints and prophets were poured into the mould of traditional recollection, and came out as fixed commandments. The precepts which had to do either with the ritual of worship or with every-day conduct were collected, and stamped with an absolute authority. Henceforth it was considered that God's revelation of Himself was now complete. The law was the final word for the divine control of life.

In the time of Jesus, there was one group in the na-

*Psalms 1:2. †Psalms 119:97. ‡Psalms 119:105.

tion whose passion it was to defend the law. This was the party of the Pharisees. They were the heirs of men who had played their part well through an earlier heroic chapter in the nation's history. In the period beginning about a century and three-quarters before the birth of Jesus, the Jews had been assailed by foreign forces which threatened to destroy completely the integrity of their religion. Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, had conquered Jerusalem, profaned the temple, and introduced insultingly into the city institutions of a pagan civilization which to the Jews were anathema. A desperate uprising threw off the external tyranny: and a body of devoted men, the Puritans of their age, set to work within to strengthen beyond all question the loyalty of Israel to its own religion and to the sacred forms in which that religion had been expressed. But as years went on, that happened which humanly is so apt to happen. The form was more easy to remember than the spirit. Orthodox religion, once conceived as a passionate devotion to the will of God in human life, became a devotion instead to the meticulous law by which life was supposed to be regulated according to the heavenly will. The Scribes, who were the scholars of the Pharisaic party, set themselves to analyze the law so that it might govern every imaginable contingency of human conduct. Each commandment should be divided and sub-divided so that no question of behavior might be left unanswered. The network of regulations wound itself round every as-

pect of imaginable life. In such and such a way the vessels for a meal must be prepared and the hands must be ritually washed. So many steps and no more a man might take on the Sabbath day, lest he profane it by violating the fourth commandment, against Sabbath work. And into such a coil of confused elaboration had the discussion of the law been drawn that in the time of Jesus, or not long afterward, the rabbis solemnly debated—and without agreement—whether or not a cripple whose house should catch on fire on the Sabbath day might without offense bring out his wooden leg.

The Pharisees and Scribes had powerful influence throughout the nation. They were regarded as the religiously elect. The people at large did not pretend to measure up to the full strictness of the Pharisaic demands, but they acknowledged their authority. Besides, it was the line of least resistance to hand over their consciences to ecclesiastical keepers. They might not do everything the Pharisees and Scribes enjoined; but it was convenient to know that there was a clearly codified rule of daily procedure which whenever they got ready to observe it would, infallibly, point the way to all desirable religious rewards. Meanwhile, the usual result was that men observed those parts of the religious law which were more mechanical and obvious, and let the deeper matters of the spirit go. They were so scrupulous, said Jesus, that when they paid their tithes they paid them even of the insignificant

spices of their tables; but they had omitted "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."

The emphasis of the teachers of the law and the emphasis of Jesus could plainly never be the same. They considered the communication of God's will to be complete; he knew it to be continuous. They looked for God in a finished book; he found God in the light which streamed through that book upon continuing life,—and he found Him in his own heart and in the living world around him. Jesus saw that the champions of the law stopped up the fresh springs of spiritual life. He would show men how these could be opened. Therefore it was inevitable that he should come into collision with the barriers of form and tradition which the Pharisees had built. The resulting conflict should be one of the critical factors in the shaping of his life and work.

Besides the law, there was another element in the contemporary thought of the Jewish people to which the thought of Jesus had to be related. This was the hope for a great deliverance of Israel, by God's power, from its national enslavement.

That hope grew out of the immemorial belief that Israel was a chosen people for whom God had appointed a glorious destiny. Outward fortunes again and again seemed to mock this hope. Foreign conquerors insulted it; one disaster after another seemed to bring it down to the dust. But always the hope rose

unconquerable; and in the period before the birth of Jesus it had become increasingly passionate and vivid. Was it thinkable that God's people should groan indefinitely under the heel of the oppressor? The night had been long, but the day would come. Let the people obey the law with unremitting devotion, and God would send the great reward.

"For this is the nation which Thou hast chosen,
And these are the people, to whom Thou findest no equal.
In Thee do we trust, for lo! Thy law is with us,
And we know that we shall not fall so long as we keep
Thy statutes."*

The popular literature of Israel in the period before and after the birth of Jesus was shaped in the one furnace of this hope. Some of these apocalypses—as these books of the time were called—survive; and it is not hard to feel again the flame of passionate desire which blazed in their words when they were written. Most of them are cast in strange symbols and vast, cloudy imagery, partly for fear lest their revolutionary incitement might be too well understood by the foreign rulers, and partly because the intense emotion of the men who wrote them could not be contained in calmer terms.

In the book of Daniel, written at about the beginning of the Maccabean wars, there is a vision of the pagan kingdoms under the figure of beasts; and of

*_Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament,_ by R. H. Charles, 1913, vol 2, p. 505. II Baruch.

the great beast, which represented the immediate tyranny of Syria, the seer writes:

"I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."*

But although under the Maccabean leaders, the Jewish nation broke the yoke of Syria, freedom was only temporary, and the great deliverance dreamed of had not come. Unable alone to establish security, Judas Maccabæus turned for help to the more distant and less dreaded power of Rome. Thus the contact of the great empire with Palestine began. In course of time, the Roman assistance against Syria turned into Roman intervention and control. Under Pompey, in 63 A. D., Rome definitely took possession of Palestine, and the country was governed by Roman procurators, or by kings of native origin—like Herod, who was king at the time of the birth of Jesus—who owed such power as they possessed to their subservience to the Roman mastery. Rome therefore, in the eyes of the fiercer spirits of the nation, became the object of an unceas-

*Daniel 7:11-14.

ing hatred. Always under the surface of the nation's life the suppressed resentments burned like subterranean fires, to burst here and there repeatedly into expression both in word and deed.

The popular literature of the nation in the century and a half before the time of Jesus was full of passionate unrest. Later it was to sink almost into despair, as when in the Apocalypse of Baruch, written some time in the first century, there sounds this lament:

"The youth of the world is past
And the strength of the creation already exhausted . . .
And the pitcher is near to the cistern,
And the ship to the port:
And the course of the journey to the city,
And life to its consummation."*

But in the earlier years—the years which were shaping the thought of the time into which Jesus was born—the faith in Israel's ultimate triumph still glowed like flame.

"The Most High will arise, the Eternal God alone,
And He will appear to punish the Gentiles,
And He will destroy all their idols.
Then thou, O Israel, shalt be happy,
And thou shalt mount upon the necks and wings of the eagle,
And they shall be ended.
And God will exalt thee,
And He will cause thee to approach to the heaven of the stars,
In the place of their habitation.

*Charles, vol. 2, p. 479. II Baruch.

And thou shalt look from on high and shalt see thy enemies
in Gehenna,
And thou shalt recognize them and rejoice."*

Nor did this passionate association of religion with a defiant patriotism confine itself to words. It broke out in deeds also. As Roman authority began to entrench itself more firmly in Palestine, resistance to it became the more fierce. Among the hills of Galilee were groups of outlaws, seldom strong enough to make effective head against the Roman power, but too fiercely determined to be easily suppressed. The intensity of their resistance is made plain in an incident which Josephus describes in his *Jewish Wars*. Herod, when a captain in the service of Rome, on one of his expeditions surrounded a number of rebels in the Galilean hills. Many of them were killed, and the remainder took refuge in caves, where Herod's men pursued them. "But as Herod was desirous of saving some of them, he invited them by a herald to come and deliver themselves up to him, but not one of them came willingly to him, and of those that were compelled to come many of them preferred death to captivity. At this stage of affairs a certain old man, the father of seven sons . . . slew them in the following manner. He ordered every one of them to go out, but stood himself at the cave's mouth, and slew each one as he went out. Herod saw the sight from the heights, and compassion moved him, and he stretched out his

*Charles, vol. 2, p. 422. Assumption of Moses.

right hand to the old man and besought him to spare his sons; but he did not relent at all at what he said, but even twitted Herod on the lowness of his origin, and slew his wife as well as his sons, and when he had thrown their dead bodies down the precipice, he at last threw himself down after them."*

About the time of the birth of Jesus occurred the most serious of these uprisings against the Roman overlordship. There is specific reference in the New Testament, both to it and to another which preceded it, in a speech made by the Pharisee Gamaliel, as recounted in the Book of Acts. "Before these days," he said, "rose up Theudas . . . to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away some of the people after him. He also perished."† But not ignobly did he perish. He represented the kind of desperate patriotism which found an echo in the hearts of thousands of his countrymen; and his death only invested with a new heroic association the cause of freedom for which he died. He had said, writes Josephus, the Jewish historian, that the Roman taxation "was no better than an introduction of slavery." He and the men who shared his spirit, continued Josephus, "have an inviolable attachment to liberty,

*Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars*. Bk. 1. Chap. 16:4.
†Acts 5:36-37.

and say that God is to be their only ruler and Lord. They also do not mind dying any death, nor indeed do they heed the tortures of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man master. . . . Rather do I fear that what I have said comes short of the resolution they show when they undergo pain."*

To memories such as these no one born in Israel of the first century could have been indifferent. In Nazareth particularly, Jesus would have felt their throbbing influence, for it was to Galilee that both Ezechias and Judas and other leaders of revolt belonged. Since the time of his earliest understanding, he must have learned from the elders of the village the stories of these men who embodied the pride and passion of his race.

And in his visits—or his several visits—to Jerusalem, Jesus must have realized with new width of understanding the significance in the nation's life of the desire for freedom which, in spite of tragic frustrations, was still so ready to rally round any inspiring leadership. At the time of the Passover, when tens of thousands poured into Jerusalem, the crowd emotions were bound to be accentuated. The racial self-consciousness glowed with hotter fire, like the bringing of coals together, when men of the same blood from scattered villages touched shoulders in the streets of the Holy City. The sight of Jerusalem stirred the

*Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities,* Bk. XVIII, Chap. 1:6.

thought of those glories—losing nothing through the glamour of traditional retelling—which belonged to the ancient kingdoms of David and Solomon; and remembering these, men looked and saw the bitter contrast of a Roman garrison in the castle of Antonia and Roman legionaries at the posts of guard. There was danger always at the time of the Passover that the crowds in Jerusalem might break into insurrection; the Romans recognized that, and customarily brought additional troops up from the coast cities to increase the garrison. All this Jesus could perceive. In the talk of his neighbors of Nazareth as they drew near to Jerusalem, and in the tense atmosphere of the city while he was there, he could not have failed to realize what men were feeling. In numberless hearts there was the same cry to the God of Israel which, according to the gospel of Luke, the old priest Zacharias of Jerusalem had once put into words—the prayer for fulfilment of the promise which God

"Spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been from of old,—
Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; . . .
The oath which he sware unto Abraham, our father,
To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies
Should serve him without fear."*

The third and final element in the thought of his time by which Jesus was environed was the expecta-

*Luke 1:70-71; 73-74.

tion of Messiah. From the background of the general hope for deliverance there began to emerge more and more clearly a belief that there should come the great Deliverer. In the prophecy of Daniel for the first time appeared the name which Jesus was afterward to take —*Son of Man*. In the Book of Enoch, written early in the first century, B. C., "the Son of Man" is God's chosen instrument for judgment.

"A being whose countenance had the appearance of a man,
And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.
And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was . . . And he answered and said unto me:
This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
With whom dwelleth righteousness,
And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,
Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him,
And whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness forever.
And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
Shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats,
And shall loosen the reins of the strong,
And break the teeth of the sinners . . .
And the earth shall rejoice,
And the righteous shall dwell upon it,
And the elect shall walk thereon."*

When we ask more exactly what the Messiah was supposed to be, and in what form he was to come, we find that the picture of him changes, like flame

*Charles, vol. 2, pp. 214-219. "Book of Enoch."

blown in the wind. Sometimes he was pictured as coming with a supernatural rending of the skies, mystical and awful. Sometimes he was prophesied as arising from the ranks of Israel, a son of the royal line of David, anointed by the grace of God to be a conqueror.

In the so-called Psalms of Solomon, it was written of the Messiah that

"He will smite the earth with the word of his mouth forever.
He will bless the people of the Lord with wisdom and gladness.
And he himself will be pure from sin, so that he may rule a great people.
He will rebuke rulers, and remove sinners by the might of his word;
And relying upon his God, throughout his days he will not stumble.
For God will make him mighty by means of His holy spirit.
And wise by means of the spirit of understanding, with strength and righteousness
And the blessing of the Lord will be with him: he will be strong and stumble not;
His hope will be in the Lord: who then can prevail against him?"*

In that picture, the weapons of the Messiah are weapons of the spirit; but elsewhere in the Psalms there is a more warlike note.

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David,
At the time in the which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant.

*Charles, vol. 2, p. 650. "Psalms of Solomon."

And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers,
And that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction.
Wisely, righteously he shall thrust out sinners from the inheritance,
He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter's vessel.
With a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance,
He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth;
At his rebuke nations shall flee before him,
And he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart."*

Such were the voices which found an echo in numberless hearts of Israel. A whisper of revolution could wake its quick response. A hint that one who might be the Messiah had appeared could set the eyes of multitudes alight with fierce expectancy. The times were restless and unquiet, full of explosive possibilities.

All this Jesus knew, as every mind in Israel knew it.

But there was another hemisphere of human fact which he also had to recognize to make the picture of his times complete. As there were multitudes to whom their patriotism was their religion, so there was a smaller number who shrugged their shoulders at patriotism and had no religion, and some who found no longer any hope in the religion which they had. Such were the party of the Sadducees, from whom came the priestly office-holders under the Roman favor; and such were those men in the nation too starkly realistic

*Charles, vol. 2, p. 649. "Psalms of Solomon."

in their outlook upon their world to believe that the hope of deliverance from Rome was anything but illusion. "One type," as Professor Simkhovitch has said in his *Toward the Understanding of Jesus,* "welcomed and aspired to the universal Roman civilization. Complete assimilation, Græco-Roman culture, was their ideal. Jewish national exclusiveness to them was nothing but provincial backwardness. . . . To be as gentlemen meant to them to be a Roman. In their hearts they accepted Rome. The other type of non-resistant was undoubtedly numerous and significant. These were men who knew enough about the world at large to see clearly what resistance to Rome implied and foreboded. They knew that resistance was a physical impossibility and only invited complete destruction and devastation. They did not love Rome because they could not fight: they hated her the more. Their non-resistance was with a glowing eye and a heart full of hate, but with an arm that did not dare to strike. . . . It had no remedy against war, for it was itself latent war, counselling prudence. Prudence—is it really so prudent? Expediency—is it really so practical? Was it a livable life that prudence and expediency were dictating? They were counselling and preparing a life of outward submission and inward rage, a cringing life of stinging defeat with an inevitable outbreak at the end, when the accumulated burden of resentment should become unbearable."*

**Toward the Understanding of Jesus,* by Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, 1925, pp. 44-45.

On all these types Jesus must have meditated through the years in Nazareth. In one sense, they were provincial types caught in the web of a provincial problem. They moved against the background of a particular history and within the limits set by those intense but narrow passions which constrained them. They touched, it is true, the wide relationships of their world, but not with any adequate comprehension. A blind obedience to the law, a waiting for the Messiah, a fomenting of revolution, a cynical acceptance of the world that was, a bitter counsel of despair—these were the shallow and contradictory solutions offered for the riddle of men's destiny. None of these had any lift of new imagination. None of these had any message which could be hailed by the restless spirit of the nation as a "light to shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

But there was one who did have a message. From the immense depths of his mind and soul he drew it —from those depths at which his consciousness touched the revealing certainties of God. Quietly in Nazareth Jesus had worked, and prayed, and thought. At length, through the broken elements of men's confused needs and desires, he caught the poetry of a purpose in which all that was great in human life must find its place. He perceived a law which was more eternal than the law the rabbis taught, and simpler.

*Luke 1:79.

He saw the way in which the deliverance his world was seeking for must come, if it came at all. In transfigured moments of his imagination, he beheld a new meaning for Messiah. And in that mystery of his soul's awareness into which no analysis can follow, he felt himself to be God's chosen Son through whom the message of the Highest should be expressed.

CHAPTER III

JESUS FACES HIS LIFE'S ALTERNATIVES

All four gospels in the New Testament date the public appearance of Jesus by the same event. A great preacher had appeared, whose name was John. He had come out of the desert, as Elijah, that first and most awe-inspiring figure among the prophets of the Old Testament times, had come long before. He carried about him the haunting formidableness of the unknown and the unexpected. At the fords of the Jordan where the roads go up to Jerusalem, he suddenly appeared, austere and arresting. He "had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts and wild honey."*

Here was a man who did not look like the crowd, neither did he think like the crowd. In mind and spirit he was as untrammelled as the desert where he had dwelt. There in the desert's gauntness, he had followed his own ways and lived his own life. Under the wide skies he thought his own thoughts. Into his soul there had come a conviction of the meaning of God for the life of His people, made up of no tepid second-hand elements, but fresh and clear and passionate. When he appeared in the valley of the Jordan and

*Matt. 3:4.

commenced preaching to the throngs of people who gathered to hear him, his voice rang with the mastery of a man who was sure of his own soul. Separated from men, he had walked in magnificent loneliness with God, and now, coming back to look into the faces of men, he brought to them a message which awed them and mastered them by that authority which only God can give.

He called upon people to repent of their sins and to be baptized as a sign that they were seeking God's forgiveness. And when he talked of sins, he spoke with plainness.

"Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" he said to some of those who stood before him. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. And soldiers also asked him,

saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages."*

It was small wonder that the news of his appearance flashed like lightning through the tense atmosphere of the unquiet time. For the message of repentance as he preached it was no ordinary call. He gave an urgent reason. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand!"† Those words struck an instant reverberation from the taut strings of the national expectancy. Had it come at last, then—the day of the long-desired deliverance? Was it true at last that Messiah himself was imminent? Men remembered that in the book of the prophecy of Malachi it was written, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."‡ Was this new prophet, clad in camel's skin, Elijah come again? Or was it possible—and men's voices sank with awe as they whispered the question one to another—that this very John might be Messiah? No wonder that the multitudes flocked to see and hear him—that, as the gospel of Matthew says, there "went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about the Jordan."§

Concerning one question they were not left in doubt. "As the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether

*Luke 3:7-14. †Matt. 3:2. ‡Malachi 4:5, A. V. §Matt. 3:5.

haply he were the Christ, John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire."* He, then, was not the Messiah. But the flaming earnestness of John made clear that he thought Messiah was at any hour to come.

In the heart of this man of the desert, that same religious longing which belonged in a measure to all the nation was lifted into a passion of conviction. His was the inspiration which comes at rare intervals through the years to the great souls who have lived and meditated in a vast communion as though they belonged not to this world but to an unseen one. Before the eyes of John, the show of things dissolved. He saw the awful urgency of those moral destinies which God should judge; and to his sight the judgment was impending. Those who hoped to enter the dawning Kingdom must make their instant preparation. Therefore he preached repentance. He called men to be baptized, as a sign of their desire to be made clean from sin, that they might be fit to enter the new life which Messiah would bring in.

The news of John's appearance spread north to Nazareth. It came to the ears of Jesus like a bell striking the decisive hour.

John's preaching did not create for him a message; his own message had been shaping in his soul through

*Luke 3:15-16.

the long, quiet years. But John's appearance was the highest witness of that religious need which he knew now must be answered. In all supremely creative expression, there is a moment when the inner ripeness and the outer urgency coincide. Deep calls to deep, and the deep within responds.

The preaching of John had in it elements with which Jesus was instantly in accord; it had in it also elements which a greater gospel would presently have to transcend. But it was with those elements which he rejoiced in that Jesus first made his association clear. John was preaching the cleansing of men's inner selves as a prerequisite of entrance into the Kingdom. He was making clear the moral basis of all great religious hope. Above all other things he had exalted in Israel the need of an humble and a contrite heart. To that message Jesus would give the outward weight of his own association. Therefore he went down from Nazareth to Jordan where John was baptizing and was himself baptized at the prophet's hands.

Commentators have been sorely put to it to explain this baptism. From the earliest years of the Christian Church it has been held that Jesus was sinless. His was accounted the one life of all time unmarred by inner evil, and therefore fit to be the deliverer of humanity from its sins. But if thus he himself was free from any need for repentance, why did he go to a baptism instituted for sinners needing repentance? Faced by this dilemma, many Christian teachers have avoided it by

turning the baptism into a kind of calculated stage-play. They assume that Jesus did not go down to the Jordan because he felt any deep significance for himself in John's baptism. Instead of that, it was a dramatic method for his own public exaltation. He was the Messiah, and he desired that there at the baptism John the prophet should proclaim him.

Reacting from this conventional explanation, with its unpleasant suggestion of the artificial, other thinkers and writers have adopted with blunt decisiveness the conclusion that the only reason why Jesus could have submitted to a baptism for sin was because he knew that he himself, like all other men, was a sinner. He went up to where John was preaching because his own conscience felt the compulsion of John's message. "He had come," says Middleton Murry, "as more than a sinner, but as a sinner he had indeed come. Whatever this man was, he was the incarnation of honesty. He would have sought no baptism for the remission of sins, had he not been conscious of sin. He came out also to see and to hear a prophet; he would have seen him and heard him, but he would not have sought his baptism for no cause, and become one with the outward ritualists whom he so passionately contemned."*

That seems clear and sound. It is excellent common sense. But an error lies exactly in the fact that it is common sense—and nothing more. There is no such cramped alternative as is here supposed—an alterna-

**Jesus, Man of Genius,* by J. Middleton Murry, 1926, pp. 22-23.

tive between a baptism which was not honest, and a baptism of one who thereby confessed his personal sins. It is strange that a writer capable of fine imagination should have moved here with such a plodding lameness. He fails to understand the mind of Jesus because so flatly and plainly he professes to understand it. Whatever else may be uncertain in the interpretation of any act of Jesus, this at least is sure: that no plausible but prosaic logic can contain the wideness of his purpose nor follow the wings of the essential poetry by which he lifted what he did above the level of its seeming contradictions.

Was it of himself alone that Jesus thought as he went up to John's baptism? Was there not a sense instead in which he thought of himself and of the nation as identified—made one through the vicarious association of his own soul with the burdens and the needs of all his brethren? Not long ago there died in America a man whom many feared and hated because they regarded his political views as dangerous: but whom many loved with a passionate devotion because they found him to be white-souled and unselfish, and because they saw in him the friend of all the weak and poor. This man, whose name was Eugene Debs, said this: "Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest of the earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while

there is a soul in prison, I am not free." In such words it is possible to recognize a reflection of that quality of self-forgetfulness which was supreme in Jesus,—a self-forgetfulness by which the great soul identifies its spiritual fortunes, and its very life, with the life of others. Jesus was not thinking about his own salvation when he came to John's baptism. His life was too much hid with God to be concerned with that. He was thinking of the unhappy, restless multitude who needed help. He was baptized into their need and into their destiny. He was about to bring to them the message of a great hope—the hope of a new kind of Kingdom; but, in that adventure, he had to risk the consequences of their sins. If he could lead the people to choose the life he saw, then he would live; but if they should refuse it, then the sin of their refusal would involve him in defeat and in disaster.

When this is understood, then the element in Jesus' baptism which was very personal can also be understood. He was baptized not because he needed to repent: but because he needed to be made ready. He had hard decisions ahead. He desired to be sealed against the imaginable sin of a faltering choice—the sin of accepting less than that highest choice which might be very costly.

That the baptism in Jordan coincided for Jesus with a deep experience of his own spirit is indicated by at least three of the gospels. In these three, including the earliest and simplest record, that of Mark, Jesus is

described as having seen the heavens opened and the spirit as a dove descending upon him, while there came a voice from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."* It does not seem that the writers of the gospels meant to indicate that they thought the people standing by saw or heard anything which to them was marvelous. Luke, it is true, adds to the statement of Mark an objective phrase when he writes that the "Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him";† but even Luke may have meant here only to accentuate the vividness of that Presence which Jesus' own soul was aware of: and Matthew, like Mark, suggests this inner and personal nature of the experience when he says, "And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him."‡ The fourth gospel, written at a later period and with pre-conceptions of its own, pictures the revelation of Jesus' Sonship to have been given at the baptism to John, rather than to Jesus; but the earlier records are the more direct and the more authentic. From their evidence it is plain that the first disciples of Jesus believed that at his baptism something of measureless significance had happened in their Master's deepest consciousness.

How did they know? Some time Jesus must have told them. He used, as he always did, the swift, bold figures of instinctive poetry to express the soaring won-

*Mark 1:11. †Luke 3:22. ‡Matt. 3:16.

der of the fact. In that moment, the tremendous and ineffable sense of God's unique benediction had come upon him, brooding above him like the near wings of a dove, speaking to him as clearly as the accents of a voice. At that moment he was aware of an utter union with his Father which made him the Son supremely appointed to be the leader and the saviour of his brethren.

"At that moment he was aware." Does this mean that only then did he for the first time attain his consciousness of a surpassing Sonship? In other words, was it not until this spiritual crisis of John's baptism that Jesus felt the awful rôle of the Messiah to belong to him? It is impossible to tell. There is no light by which the inner paths of Jesus' consciousness can be surely followed. But the truth would seem to be that back of any event of his public life lie long processes belonging to the earlier years. He had been meditating the meaning of the Kingdom—the insufficiency of old hopes, the need of a new and nobler one. He had seen also a new conception of Messiah; and because it was he who had *seen* it, inescapably he must come to recognize that it was he also who must *fulfil* it. When he came down into the Jordan valley and received John's baptism, it was not that either in his thought or in his purpose something wholly new occurred; rather something which had been questioning came to its unquestioned climax. That which was creative in the experience was the projection into light of certainties

long shaping in the quietness of his soul. There by the crowded banks of the river, the perception round him of the needy, groping multitude and the inner awareness of his favor with God met like two poles of an electric current, and flowed into a consciousness of his mission which now should dominate his days.

It is needful that we should dwell with a quiet and steady meditation upon this rich meaning of Jesus' inner life through the hidden years if we would interpret aright the things we see when he moves out into the light. He who was to teach men the things of the spirit had himself first lived in the spirit. He from whom was to grow a new religion was himself a witness to the power of religion. He who was to show to the poorest human creatures the glory of God had first found for himself the glory of God through the ways of human seeking—there in Nazareth as he prayed, as he worked, as he looked on sky, and earth, and man. On those voyages of spiritual discovery upon which the great souls in every age have gone, he went beyond the borders of their farthest cruising. There were ocean widenesses of the meaning of God where he was

> ". . . the first, who ever burst
> Into that silent sea."

Filled then, with this incomparable sense of relationship to God, and identified in sympathy with all the needs of men, Jesus faced, after his baptism, the necessity of choosing finally how his message should

be related to the thoughts and emotions of his time. What did this Sonship which he felt involve? What road must he mark out among the concrete alternatives of his world? Upon these questions he had already meditated in Nazareth; but now, on the threshold of his wider work, he must confirm what he had believed in through those preliminary years. Therefore as Mark's gospel says, "straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days."*

"The wilderness" means the desolate and solitary country of the hills that rise from the deep valley of the Jordan. Among their rocky gorges no travelled pathways run. Over them broods the solemnity of a vast silence. Round them stretches the great horizon into which the sun leaps in the morning like a sword, and over which in the purple night the great stars course and wheel. There Jesus went into the same wide loneliness where more than one of the prophets of Israel had gone before, to wrestle with the issues of his destiny.

The story of what happened there must have come to the disciples from Jesus himself. There was no one else who could have told it; and the account, as it has come down through the gospels, has in it a compelling reality, and a sure relationship to what happened afterward in Jesus' life, which carries conviction of its authenticity.

*Mark 1:12-13.

Besides a summary reference to it in the gospel of Mark, there are two accounts of the temptation in the other gospels. One is in the fourth chapter of Matthew; and the other, differing from that of Matthew only in the fact that the three several aspects of the temptation are recorded in another order, is the following passage from the fourth chapter of Luke:

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil. And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, he hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread. And Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

"And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

"And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee; and, On their hands they shall

bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

"And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season."*

It is necessary to remember that this record of the temptation is cast in a highly symbolic form. The elements of Jesus' inner spiritual struggle are projected like figures in a drama. The voice of the compromising possibilities which whispered in his soul becomes personified into a voice which speaks to him from without. In the vividness of his experience, temptation becomes—the Tempter.

With most plausible and innocent-seeming suggestion the Tempter first approached him. Jesus had now been many days in the wilderness, absorbed in an intensity of prayer and meditation which had made him unconscious of the need of food. Now suddenly he was hungry. "If thou art the Son of God," said the Tempter, "command this stone that it become bread."

It was the suggestion which always comes when the needs of the body, suddenly grown conscious, challenge the spirit. Why should he be hungry? *"If* thou art the Son of God," he echoed. *"If."* Could one be sure, when he was hungry, there in an empty, desert world? If he were the Son of God—ought it not be possible that he should work a miracle to satisfy his need? What other answer was there to the Tempter's

*Luke 4:1-13.

inference? Unless the mighty spiritual relationship which he had felt within himself could answer the most elemental urgencies of life, could he be sure that he indeed was Son of God? Could he be sure of God himself?

Hunger. It was not that he alone was hungry. Beyond himself his thought swept out to that wide human life from which for a little while he had drawn apart. He thought of the poor. He knew their lot. He himself had had no padded existence, but had lived in touch with the reality of the daily struggle. He knew how hard men had to work, how little sometimes they got, how urgent were the needs of that material existence which pressed upon them all. If he were to be the chosen Son of the loving God to help his human brethren, would it not be his most important mission to lighten those material burdens,—to bring a new programme for immediate action to the over-taxed and under-rewarded people? This power which he felt within himself, how could it be better used than in turning the stones of men's meagre existence into bread?

Questions such as these beset him, wrestled with him, demanded that he answer. The peril of the temptation lay in the uncertainty whether it was indeed temptation or whether it was truth.

In the condensed narrative of the gospels, Jesus' answer comes forth immediately to meet the Tempter's question. But the perspective of the real fact may have

been different. Long hours of mental agonizing may have gone by before Jesus spoke.

Then he knew. He had looked the whole truth in the face. He knew that he could never forget his sympathy for the poor. Their obvious needs would always pull upon his heart. But there was something else which had to be remembered. To be obsessed with the desires of the body was to imperil a greater value. What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? His own leadership might help men lose their souls if he let them clothe him in their own hopes, interpret him according to their own wishes, and bend his ministry into the service of their shortsighted and clamorous needs. They would be led to follow him for the *things* they might believe they could get out of him. But meanwhile he knew that there is a divine hunger within the heart of man which no material things can satisfy, and that if men bend their eyes first upon the material things, the divine self within is fed on husks until it dies. That divine hunger he must first quicken and then feed. Out of the deepest experience of his people the age-long truth of life's right relationship had come down. He lifted its meaning clear now like a torch.

"It is written," he said to the Tempter, "that man shall not live by bread alone."

Then the temptation changed. Its suggestion melted into another picture.

If it should not be his mission to make his nation

prosperous with quickly-won material things, might it not be his mission to fulfil for them a less material but scarcely less instinctive passion? What of their desire for lordship in the earth? What of their expectation of a conquering Messiah?

He knew that if he went back into the nation which had heard John preach, took the name Messiah for himself and publicly declared he was the appointed One of God, that instant the crowd, who believed already that the kind of Messiah they wanted was at hand, would interpret him in terms of their own desires. The passion of their old hatred for those whom they believed to be their oppressors, which hung like a thunder-cloud with flickering lightning upon the horizon of their emotions, would come pouring back to fill the whole sky of their thought with its thunder and flame. Linked with that expectation, Jesus might ride to power as in a chariot of fire. And why not? Why should he not take the wings of a hurricane to do what might be regarded as the cleansing work of God, and then, when this storm of violence had passed, order men's lives anew in that still sunlight which might follow the storm? So the dream of power shaped itself,—weaving into its texture the color of those imaginations which had come to him upon the hills of Nazareth, as he looked out on ancient battle-fields and new-built cities, on the sea where Roman triremes dipped to the horizon, and on the roads where the sunlight glittered on the standards of the legions whose tread was heard across the world.

"Do you remember what you dreamed of as you looked out from those hills?" the tempting Spirit asked.

Jesus could not but remember.

"The rewards of the great are yours if you dare believe that you are great," the voice went on. "The world's prizes wait for him who will boldly follow the world's way. Be practical. Be ready, with the readiness I can teach you—the readiness of the strong hand and the ambitious will. The kingdoms of the world and the glories of them are mine, and they can be yours, on one easy and common-sense condition. All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me."

So spoke the voice of the ambitions of this world to Jesus' spirit. In it he heard, also, the great fierce heart of his people speaking,—speaking to his patriotism, speaking to his own tremendous sense of power. But to that temptation now perceived and more than once afterward to be repeated, Jesus made the answer to which steadily he was to cleave. He might not stoop to expediency. Through all suggestions of a shrewder wisdom, he must hold faithful to the Highest. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," he answered, "and Him only shalt thou serve."

In a mightier way than any other had dreamed before, he did seek to possess the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. But he could not take the world's short road. By a long, long road of spiritual adventure, he must win that mastery over the inward life of men which was the only mastery he saw to be

ultimately worth the winning. If he had been willing to fan and foment the party loyalties of the crowd, he might have rallied behind him a huge popular enthusiasm which would have overturned the throne of the Herods and set him on a throne instead. In his age and time, he might have seemed glorious and successful. But so to have succeeded would have been the betrayal of what he knew to be the mission of his soul. He had come to lift up in the midst of human life an uncalculating faith in the power of the spirit which was too great to show immediate results. He had to dare the risk of seeming to be a failure because he lived and thought and adventured upon a scale which should take the development of the ages to express the meaning of its success.

Thus on the threshold of his work, Jesus rejected that dream of the King-Messiah which he might have followed. He would make his Kingdom, as he afterward said, like leaven. The world could not be greatly changed until the hearts of men were changed within.

Then, very subtly, followed the last temptation. It came, as perilous temptations often come, in that moment when a moral victory appears to have been won, and the gates of the soul are left unguarded.

"So you have repelled me," the beguiling Spirit said. "You have refused the glories I could offer. It was a brave refusal. You deserve the rewards of the God you serve. Doubtless He will give you a sunny road to walk upon from this time forth."

Why not? Jesus had chosen the way of spiritual faithfulness. Surely God would protect him with His favor, and clear resistance from his path. Old joyous notes of the scriptures may have rung in his ears like chants of victory. "The path of the righteous is as the dawning light."*

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."†

"Put God to the test, then," said the tempting Spirit. "Show, as you have a right to do, your confidence that religion is justified by its results."

"Go out to your life and work and expect God to protect you," the voice went on. "Dangers which might hurt others cannot hurt you. You must walk unscathed. If you should climb up to a pinnacle of the temple and throw yourself down, God would protect you. Is it not written 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'?"

Was that not true? What surer evidence of faith could there be than to trust in God's unswerving favor?

Then through the veils of that plausible logic, the eyes of Jesus looked into the heart of a mystery wherein there glowed the awful torches of a mightier truth. Was it possible that the will of God might lead another way? What if not through safety, but through suffering, the road to Messiahship might run?

*Prov. 4:18. †Isaiah 26:3.

"You suffer?" said the Tempter. "You on whom rests the favor of God?"

Jesus was silent.

Did he remember then the words which Isaiah had written long ago,—strange words which grew luminous now with a new suggestion? The prophet had dared to turn from the old conviction that righteousness and reward must be weighed in equal balances. He had seen that in this tangled human world redemption might need to be vicarious. The best of the nation might have to suffer with and for the sins of the worst. And what if that which the prophet had seen to be true of many men, might need to be supremely true of one chosen to be the representative and the redeemer for the many? Must it be so for God's nearest Son that men should be able to say "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed"?*

God must be free to answer. The Son must be ready to follow the leading of that love whose far wisdom should grow luminous as the days went on.

Jesus looked into the face of the last temptation, and he said: "Again it is written, thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God."

The tempting voice was gone. Over the soul of Jesus the glory of his assured self-conquest breathed and trembled like the mounting colors of the dawn. Winged

*Isaiah 53:5.

shapes of power stood shining on all the horizons of his consciousness. "Behold," says the gospel of Matthew, "angels came and ministered unto him."*

It was true that the temptations of the wilderness would come again. Then the "devil departed from him," says the third gospel, and adds immediately these significant words,—"for a season." At many a crossroad of his subsequent decisions, Jesus would have to face the same suggestions which had come to him in the wilderness. But once for all he had made his choice. He knew what loyalty he would serve, and how to serve it.

Expressed by contrast with the false alternatives which whispered to him in his temptations, that loyalty may be summed up in its distinctions thus:

He would not let the material necessities of life blind him to the deeper hunger of the spirit.

He would not follow the short-cut of the world's expedients to seeming power, and forfeit so the power of that real regeneration which could be accomplished only by an unwearying spirit following the long road that led into men's hearts.

He would not hamper his obedience to his Father's unfolding purpose by any expectation of ease, or safety, or even of life itself as his reward.

But not by any negations can the spirit of Jesus be fully expressed. When he came down from the hills, he came invested with the radiant power of his positive

*Matt. 4:11.

choice. The shadows of the unworthy possibilities had passed away because of the great light which was within. He was aflame with God. He walked in the beauty of that high communion; and he saw life bathed in the light of its eternal meaning. If he could open men's eyes to know God as he knew Him, then for the first time they might rise to the stature of their diviner manhood. If he could make them feel the transfigurement of that glory which was seeking for their souls, the Kingdom of a new life would dawn upon the earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE

When Jesus came out from the wilderness, he was met with important news. John the Baptist had been put in prison. Preaching against the sins of the common people might have been safe enough, but John was no respecter of persons. He was not the sort who truckles to the great. He had publicly denounced a king. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, had adulterously married Herodias, wife of his half-brother Philip; and John the prophet had included him among the common sinners who needed to repent. Herod was indignant, but with an undercurrent of superstitious uneasiness that made him half afraid. Herodias was not afraid. Her malice was cold and deadly. Driven by her persuasion, Herod had John arrested, and shut him in the gloomy fortress of Machærus, at the edge of the desolate country which crumbles away to the deep vat of the Dead Sea.

That is the way in which the gospels describe the arrest of John. But the historian Josephus suggests another cause for Herod's action. To Herod's private resentment there was added also a larger uneasiness. Referring to John's preaching, Josephus writes:

"Now as many flocked to him, for they were greatly

moved by hearing his words, Herod, fearing that the great influence John had over the people might lead to some rebellion (for the people seemed likely to do anything he should advise), thought it far best . . . to prevent any mischief he might cause; and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of his leniency when it should be too late."*

But whatever may have been Herod's reasons, in any case he had imprisoned John. Here was a challenging fact for Jesus to confront. What would happen now to that great sense of the certainty of God which he had carried with him in the wilderness? Here was the contemptuous contradiction which the actual world flung in the face of religious confidence. A prophet had proclaimed God, and the prophet was in prison. Jesus could not fail to know that the chances were that he would never come out. John's voice was stopped. Presently John would die.

The people would have had an answer to this situation. John was the hero of the crowd. They may not have relished the directness of his preaching against their own sins, but they exulted in the boldness with which he faced Pharisees and Sadducees, rulers and priests—vipers, crawling away from a fire, he had called them to their face—and they held their breath with startled admiration when he spoke his mind concerning Herod. They gloried in him as a good fighter.

*Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, Bk. XVIII, Chap. 5:2.

It was a shame to see him fall,—fall before Herod, that cheap tool of Rome. If only they had a leader! If only Messiah were really come, then Herod would see how long John would stay in Machærus!

Was the Tempter, who had "departed for a season," back at Jesus' shoulder—whispering:

"Here is your opportunity. Prove yourself the leader of the people. Deliver John"?

Certain it is that Jesus could not have heard the news of John's imprisonment without emotion. He admired John and loved him. John's preaching had called him out of Nazareth. He counted John the greatest man he knew. How could he begin his work unless he struck a blow for John?

With the people, the conclusion would have been plain. If any one believed himself commissioned as a deliverer from God, then let him come with vengeance upon this tyrannous Herod, and set the prophet free! But Jesus had another answer to the voice of this instinctive passion which echoed in his ears. There in the wilderness he had looked past appearances to the infinite realities which lie beyond. He was guiding himself by a farther light than the accidents of the hour could furnish. He could not work the will of God through violence. The Kingdom of the Spirit must be built by spiritual means, and in that Kingdom the soul of John infallibly would have its place.

It is not easy to understand Jesus' decision. Men kindle to the kind of courage which is expressed in

the hasty act. It is not so easy to understand the magnificent moral courage which holds to a great aim in spite of the pitifulness of immediate contradictions. It may be that the worst of it for Jesus was to know that John himself could not yet fully understand. But some day, through life or death, he knew John would. John's spirit, like his own, should be builded into the fabric of a Kingdom in which the ways of God should find their vindication.

On into Galilee therefore, Jesus went, with a clear message on his lips. "The Kingdom of God is at hand," he said. "Repent ye, and believe in the gospel."*

There is need to listen well to those words; for the meaning of Jesus' ministry sounds through them as through a trumpet, blowing its bold challenge against the harsh background of the time, in a world whose ranged and stubborn facts would answer him with mocking echoes.

"The Kingdom of God at hand." But closer at hand were the symbols of another kingdom. The gospel of Luke dates the beginning of Jesus' ministry as "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar."† Tiberius, who came to the throne of Rome in the year 14 A. D., was one of the ablest of the emperors. He had succeeded Augustus, under whom the security of the empire had been so established and its prosperity made so glittering that panegyrists in Rome celebrated

*Mark 1:15. †Luke 3:1.

his era as a golden age. What Augustus had builded, Tiberius could and did maintain. In his young manhood, he had been one of the strong leaders of the far-flung Roman armies—in Spain, in Armenia, on the Rhine, and on the Danube. Now, at this moment when Jesus went back into Galilee, he sat entrenched in power at the centre of the world—a hard man, not without justice; taciturn, and formidable. Pontius Pilate, procurator in Judæa, was his representative; Herod Antipas, in Galilee, held sway by his sufferance; the legions which garrisoned the important cities of Palestine, and marched along its roads, went hither and thither at his word. There is no likelihood that he had even so much as heard of Jesus, and certainly he would not have given much consideration to him if he had.

Nevertheless, Jesus was proclaiming another Kingdom, which should be more important than the empire Tiberius ruled. He proclaimed a power which was yet invisible, as against the immensely visible and ponderable power of Rome. And the curious, plain fact of history is this:—that not only has the empire of Tiberius crumbled, but Tiberius himself has so faded into the limbo of the dead that no single individual on earth to-day has any flicker of personal emotion concerning anything he thought or did; while Jesus of Nazareth, who seemed to have behind him less force than the least of the legionaries of Tiberius, is linked with the most vital concerns of multitudes

in every generation. Obviously it was not an idle matter when he began to preach the Kingdom of God as though it were important news.

But what did it *mean?* And what relation did it bear to the thoughts and passions of the time?

Not that relation which many of the restless spirits in Israel had hoped. They chafed beneath the yoke of Rome, and they wanted to see it broken. With the blood of his people in his veins, and the traditions of his people in his soul, Jesus could not have been indifferent to the fact of this alien rule. More than once that same temptation must have come to him which was symbolized in the wilderness—the temptation of the strong man's surging instinct to lift his hand against the insolence of tax-gatherers, against the supercilious presence of the legions, against the whole heavy fact of foreign domination. But the prevailing thought of Jesus moved upon another plane. In his vision, it was not by force that force must be overcome. To match swords with Rome could invite nothing but disaster,—not only the disaster of physical destruction, which Jesus foresaw, but the graver disaster of a spiritual opportunity blindly foregone. The Kingdom which needed to be established was not a new embodiment of that ancient lust for physical conquest which Rome happened for the moment to represent; it should be a different Kingdom, founded on new motives and calling men into a new life, before the witness of which the old kingdoms should melt away.

Who should establish that Kingdom? God. In that one word the tremendous faith of Jesus focussed. His belief in God was no tepid hypothesis,—which is all that some men conceive when they think of "religion"; it was a radiant and overwhelming confidence. He believed that what men could not do, God could do, and would, if He could find souls obedient to His purpose. He believed that the spiritual energies of God are transcendent facts, mightily existent, superbly available to accomplish in human life what that life in its uninspired dulness would not dare to dream.

Therefore the emphasis of his message falls where he placed it. The Kingdom into which he called men was the Kingdom *of God*. No mere mortal contrivings could bring it to pass. There was an aspect in which it could not grow up out of this world, but must come down from the spiritual world which is above. The times and seasons of its consummation rested in the hands of God.

But the Kingdom, though a gift of God, must be received by men. It must show itself in lives transformed by a new relationship to God. It should work as salt, and light, and leaven.

The unqualified confidence which Jesus had in God, and in His sure reliance, worked in him two results. In the first place, it gave to him an unexampled consciousness of power. It so released and unified the energies of his spirit that he could exert a control beyond all ordinary limits upon the physical as well as the

spiritual natures of men. He felt himself to be the ambassador of a Kingdom which no mortal might could stay; and with a splendor of imagination which sometimes required language like that of the apocalypses for its expression, he foresaw the Kingdom's victory.

But because of this very faith in the greatness of the spiritual forces which could be depended upon to bring in the Kingdom, a second thing was true of Jesus, which on the surface seemed like a contradiction. He held a purpose which was infinite; but he was content with means which most people would have thought insignificant. He was proclaiming a message which had enormous dramatic consequences; but he went about his ministry in undramatic, quiet ways. He deliberately avoided outward sensations. He trusted in the expansive power of that new relationship between men and God which was the inner quality of the Kingdom. With *that* established, he was as sure of the issue as he was sure of God.

So he did not come back into Galilee to stir multitudes to excitement. He simply dealt with life as he found it, where he found it. He took hold of individuals, and put the new leaven of the Kingdom into them.

One day he walked by the lake of Galilee, and he saw two fishermen, Simon and Andrew, casting their net. He stood on the shore and watched them. When their boat drew in toward the land, they felt the eyes of this man upon them. He spoke:

"Come with me, and I will make you fish for men."

They beached the boat, hung up the net, and left the lake behind.

Jesus went farther along the shore and saw two more men. Like Simon and Andrew, they were brothers—James and John, sons of Zebedee. They were with their father in a boat, mending their nets. He called them, too, and they came. Zebedee stayed behind. Age did not follow him as readily as youth. There was something about him which drew the eager and adventurous, and left settled and conservative people shaking their heads.

Why did those four men follow him? They could not have clearly told. Fishermen, and men who follow the sea, are not given to facile speech. They know how to act better than how to talk. And they learn to act quickly, when wind and weather compel it, or when the fish are running and opportunity is gone if they are slow. So when Jesus called they responded, simply because at that moment it was the instinctive thing to do. Why? "Because we wanted to," they would have answered brusquely. "He talked like a man who knew our language. And there was something in the look of him which we could not get away from. We had to go."

If any one had asked those four fishermen questions of theology they would have looked back with blank amazement. Who was Jesus, and what relationship did he have to God? How should they know? They would wonder about that afterward, but then the question

had never occurred to them. They only knew that there was something in his manhood which got hold of the man in them. He was different. They wanted to be where he was, more than they wanted anything else.

What Jesus did with them is beautifully suggested in a passage from the gospel of John. That gospel, as we have already said, was written later than the others, and it is more a meditation than a history. But there are passages in it which guarantee themselves because they ring in such accord with facts we know. John tells how when Jesus first saw Simon he spoke to him words like these: "You are Simon, son of Jonas. I will give you a new name. I am going to call you Peter."*

Now Peter meant a rock, and a rock was the last thing Simon seemed to be. His neighbors would have laughed at the suggestion; Simon in his own secret soul must have flinched at it. Was Jesus mocking him? What did he mean—calling him a rock?

For as the story of his life makes abundantly evident, Simon might have been said to be more like sand than rock. He was impetuous and unstable. He was full of quick impulses which he seldom carried through, ready with brave beginnings which generally came to a lame end. Jesus perceived that at once. But he did not say to Simon, "It is too bad about these failings of yours. You must always remember them

*John 1:42.

and try to get rid of them." He took another course, peculiarly his own. He gave Simon a name which every time he heard it would sound to him the challenge of his own, far-off ideal. Perhaps with a little, rallying smile around his lips but with a steady look in his eyes, he said to him: "You are Peter. It is not only that you are going to be the Rock. In my expectation, you are the Rock already."

Peter never forgot. He might falter, but he could not wholly fail. Through Jesus' confidence he had entered into the Kingdom of new spiritual possibilities in which he moved as a man who knew he had a mighty citizenship.

Presently came the Sabbath day. Jesus went into Capernaum, the city on the lake shore which was now increasingly to be his home. The elders of the congregation called upon him to speak to the people, which was a custom frequently followed in the case of visitors who were believed to have something fitting to say. The congregation at Capernaum were used to addresses, to which as a rule they doubtless listened with a pious somnolence, and then went away with the mild consciousness that they had been through a proper ceremony. But this was a different day. Here was a speaker whom they instantly realized to be unlike the ones they were accustomed to. He was not making the old conventional comments which they had heard a thousand times before. "They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as hav-

ing authority, and not as the Scribes."* His heart was in what he said, and their own hearts began to glow. A Kingdom of God which reached out for them now, here, in Capernaum, the Kingdom of a great love in the light of which something within them stood up straight, like men who wake and see the sunrise: the Kingdom of a new kindness and gentleness and mercy,—this was not an echo out of a book. This was a living message which *they* could understand.

But, even so, the most startling event of the day was not the sermon. In the crowd that pressed into the synagogue there was one of those pitiful persons of whom Galilee in that tense time seems to have had many,—people out of their minds, or nervously deranged. "Possessed of devils," the popular language said. Suddenly through the silence of the synagogue, came this man's frenzied voice crying out:

"Let us alone, what have we to do with you, you Jesus of Nazareth?"

Something in this man's poor, fluttered mind was conscious of the power of the great personality standing there. In his darkness, he trembled between fear and a strange excitement of dim desire. "Are you come to destroy us?" he shouted. Then shuddering, he said, "I know who you are. The Holy One of God."†

The people listened to his ravings. But Jesus did more than listen.

Here was a child of God who needed help. Fur-

*Mark 1:22. †Mark 1:24.

thermore, even in his distraught spirit, there was a groping upon which help could lay hold. He realized that there was power in Jesus, and half of him struggled toward it even as half of him shrank away.

Jesus spoke to the wildness in the man as though it were something wholly alien. "Hold thy peace," he said, "and come out of him."*

There was a great cry, a convulsion as though the man's body would be torn in two. Then the man who had been possessed, opened wide eyes, gazed at Jesus, breathless,—healed!

The congregation broke up. No wonder that, as Mark says, "they were all amazed." They went away with excited questionings. "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him!"† The report spread fast. In a little while, it was all over Galilee.

From the synagogue Jesus went back to the house where Simon Peter and Andrew lived. Simon's wife's mother was sick of a fever, and they told Jesus of it. He went in where she was, took her by the hand and lifted her up. The fever left her. She got out of bed, and went about her work.

That is the picture as Mark gives it, swiftly drawn, with no embellishments or explanations. What sort of a fever did she have? How did Jesus free her from it? There is no telling. But there is a sense in which the fact passes for present thought, as apparently it had

*Mark 1:25. †Mark 1:27.

passed for Mark, out of the realm of the strange and inexplicable into the realm of the expected. When the surcharged spirit of Jesus came into contact with human weakness, great results were bound to follow.

After what happened in the synagogue and what happened in Simon Peter's house, Jesus was not likely to be left long alone. By evening, "all the city was gathered together at the door."* People had brought their sick and afflicted to him from every quarter, and he healed them.

So the Sabbath came to an end for the people of Capernaum, but it was not at an end for Jesus. That night, long before daybreak, he rose up and went out into a solitary place to pray. Power had gone out of him; he needed to go back to the source of power.

It is well not to hasten past this picture of Jesus praying there somewhere in the stillness before the dawn. It is easy to see the river of his obvious activities; easy also to forget its sources in the hidden region of the spirit's hills. If he did much, he meditated more. Behind his contact with men lay the deep fact of his communion with God.

By its very nature, this communion is not something that lies open upon the pages of the gospels. It belongs to the inmost shrine of Jesus' soul. Except for a few brief sentences which the disciples afterward were to hear break from his lips as he knelt under the olive-trees of Gethsemane, and a burst of thanksgiving

*Mark 1:33.

which according to the gospel of Matthew he uttered once at a time when the disciples' own ministry had been blessed with success, the first three gospels give little hint as to the content of Jesus' prayers. They do make it abundantly plain that with him prayer was something to which he continually resorted. Luke states very simply once that Jesus went "out into a mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God."* But what he said that night and in other long hours of his vigils, we do not know.

Notwithstanding, it is possible to draw some inference at least concerning the nature of Jesus' prayers. For an attentive reading of the gospels will show that the references to his praying occur particularly at those crises when some important matter was to be decided; when he himself needed to restore his calmness and his strength; or when he was interceding for the needs of others.

He prayed that he might be enlightened. He had done that in the wilderness after his baptism. He did it repeatedly again when the crossroads of his decisions were dimmed by the dust of crowding and contradictory human facts. If his feet then turned into the paths which led upward to the hills, so also did his soul. He climbed up into the atmosphere of the quietness of God, where the light that never was on land or sea shone for him upon the confusions of the earth.

*Luke 6:12.

What prayer may thus have meant for Jesus in his search for the guidance of God is at least adumbrated in the experience of one of his great followers of a more recent time. David Livingstone, whose body lies buried in the nave of Westminster Abbey, explorer of the depths of Africa and a pioneer of modern Christian missions, wrote once in his journal: "I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ."* And of his prayers his biographer wrote as follows: "To do all this, Livingstone must have had a very clear perception of the course of duty. This is true. But how did he get this? First, his singleness of heart, so to speak, attracted the light: 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.' Then, he was very clear and very minute in his prayers. Further, he was most careful to scan all the providential indications that might throw light on the Divine will. And when he had been carried so far on the line of duty, he had a strong presumption that the line would be continued, and that he would not be called to turn back. It was in front, not in rear, that he expected to find the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire."†

With Jesus himself, as with this man who long afterward was to be his disciple, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire moved in front. Jesus' life was a suc-

*_The Personal Life of David Livingstone_, by W. G. Blakie, 1860, p. 155.

†Blakie, p. 132.

cession of new and more daring ventures—to the story of which the pages of this book move on. For the commitment of his life to the increasingly costly decisions to which he felt himself directed, he knew again and again that he must recruit his inward power. It has been finely said that the religious instinct is a search for two great satisfactions:—for light on the mystery of life, and strength for the mastery of life. When, as with such a one as Jesus, the light becomes an intense illumination foreshowing the paths of difficult consecration, then there is a correspondingly greater need for strength that these paths may be pursued with mastery. In prayer he found this mastery. He knew how to lift what might have been his own conflicting impulses up into that sky of the thoughts of God where the eternal sureness swung them into harmony and peace.

But it was not only of and for himself that Jesus prayed. He prayed for his disciples. He must have prayed too for all the groping and pathetic nation he was seeking to redeem. Here again scant record of his prayers exist, and at best no detailed record could convey their inner quality. But the whole picture of Jesus' spirit which gradually shapes itself from the narrative of the gospels is a guide to the imagination when it seeks to understand the secret of his prayers. As from the hilltop of his solitudes he looked down upon Galilee, with its cities and towns and its little houses where men lived, he may have brooded over them in ways

to which these words of a present-day Eastern poet bear perhaps some distant likeness:

"Tell me, what have you in these houses? And what is it you guard with fastened doors?

Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals your power?

Have you beauty, that leads the heart from things fashioned of wood and stone to the holy mountain?

Tell me, have you these in your houses?

Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master?

But you, children of space, you restless in rest, you shall not be trapped or tamed.

Your house shall not be an anchor but a mast.

You shall not fold your wings that you may pass through doors, nor bend your heads that they strike not against a ceiling, nor fear to breathe lest walls should crack and fall down.

You shall not dwell in tombs made by the dead for the living.

And though of magnificence and splendor, your house shall not hold your secret nor shelter your longing.

For that which is boundless in you abides in the mansion of the sky, whose door is the morning mist, and whose windows are the songs and the silences of night."*

**The Prophet,* by Kahlil Gibran, 1925, pp. 38-40.

CHAPTER V

PUBLICANS AND PHARISEES

When his friends, the new disciples Peter and others, found Jesus in the morning after his night of prayer, he was ready for a farther adventure. "Let us go elsewhere into the next towns," he said, "that I may preach there also."*

So through the towns of Galilee he went, but Mark does not preserve for us the record of what he said. Mark does give, however, another picture of Jesus' treatment of an individual. There came one day a man with the most dreaded of all afflictions. He was a leper; but he cried to Jesus: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Here was another man who had the faith which seems always to have been the pre-requisite for the current of spiritual power that was in Jesus to begin to flow. "I will," he said, "be thou made clean."†

Then he said to this cleansed leper two things which are not at first easy to understand together. "See thou say nothing to any man,"‡ he charged him. Jesus had begun already to perceive the danger to his primary purpose which was involved in the growing excitement over cures and healings. He wanted to lead men's

*Mark 1:38. †Mark 1:41. ‡Mark 1:44.

souls so close to God that they would find there what wholeness of living meant—not have them snatch at some alleviation of a particular distress and then go away imagining that this was all they needed. So he did not want this leper to go shouting about his healing to the crowd. But at the same time he commanded him, "go show thyself to the priest."* He wanted the man to confirm by this objective witness the results of his own faith. And he wanted to tie him thus through a solemn act of gratitude to the institution in the nation which ought to help him remember God.

Whether the leper who had been cleansed did go, as Jesus commanded him, and show himself to the priest and make his thank-offering according to the church's law, we do not know; but what we do know is that he promptly forgot Jesus' instruction to keep silence, and blazoned far and wide the story of his cleansing, as a marvel which very likely grew with each re-telling. Consequently Jesus was so pressed upon by clamorous and beseeching people that he "could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places."†

Days passed before he came again into Capernaum, and now there occurred an incident which revealed a hostile influence that from this time on was to gather itself increasingly against Jesus. He had gone into a house, and immediately a crowd collected about the door. Those who could, pressed in; the others jostled

*Mark 1:44. †Mark 1:45.

in the streets. Into the midst of the crowd there pushed four men, carrying another man, paralyzed, on a litter. When they saw that it was impossible to get through the door, they managed from another direction to hoist their patient, and to climb up themselves, onto the flat roof of the house. They pulled up the flat tiles which covered it, and let the paralyzed man down into the room where Jesus was. Jesus was used to insistent people; but here was a combination of determined purpose and ingenuity which must have made him smile as he looked up at those four resolute faces peering down through the broken roof.

Meanwhile, this pitiful friend of theirs lay at Jesus' feet. Jesus looked at him with a great compassion. Something wistful and needy was showing in his eyes. "Son," said Jesus, "thy sins are forgiven."*

Now there were some Scribes in the room. They began to whisper indignantly to each other. "Why does this man thus speak? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?"†

The quick perceptions of Jesus caught their whisperings, or read their tell-tale faces. "Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts?"‡ he said, "Which do you think is easier,—to say to this paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven, or to tell him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk?"§

He knew which they thought was easier. It was easier to say that his sins were forgiven, provided that

*Mark 2:5. †Mark 2:7. ‡Mark 2:8-9. §Mark 2:9.

it was said by proper officials of the church, in regular and prescribed fashion. But though the words were frequently and conventionally said, they had no vivid idea of anything immediate that they might mean.

Jesus wanted them to know that the power of the spirit was a tremendous and living thing.

He looked down upon the paralyzed man,—this man who with his friends had reached him through so bold an act of faith. "Arise," he said, "take up your bed, and go to your own house."* The man rose up, and with his pallet on his shoulder went out through the astonished crowd.

Besides his compassion for the individual, what moved Jesus to that healing? He expressed it to the Scribes. "That you may know," he said, "that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."† "The Son of Man,"—that is the first time this name appears in the gospels. It was a name which might mean little or much, according to those who listened to it. Like his parables, this name had a surface suggestion, and another deeper one which only those who "had ears to hear" could understand. "The Son of Man" might mean *man* only. But in the Book of Daniel there had been recorded a vision in which "one like unto a son of man"‡ became Messiah. In other passionate apocalypses of Jewish religious literature this same title had been repeated—as we have seen—as a name for the Messiah. But mostly when it was so used, it had meant

*Mark 2:11. †Mark 2:10. ‡Daniel 7:13.

a Messiah coming supernaturally down from heaven in the day of vengeance at the end of the world. Jesus of Nazareth, standing there in the synagogue, obviously did not fill that picture. To the crowd at large, therefore, it would not occur that Jesus used the words with any messianic meaning. But for him, and for those who could understand, the meaning was there. Through the veiled title, there shone the face of a new conception—the conception which Jesus had seen in Nazareth and had chosen in the wilderness; a Messiah of immediate salvation; a Messiah of mercy, by God's love anointed on earth to cleanse men from their sins and set them free.

It is true that there are writers on the New Testament who deny that Jesus had any such idea. Professor Case, in his *Jesus: A New Biography,** has written:

"Even had Jesus been sufficiently familiar with the imagery of Daniel and I Enoch, to speak of the Son of Man in connection with the institution of the Kingdom, we are not at liberty to infer immediately that he would apply the phrase to himself. Indeed it would still be very difficult if not impossible to imagine that he could have so designated himself. The Son of Man in Jewish apocalyptic speculation was not to appear on earth until the day of judgment. In the meantime he resided with God in the heavens. Ancient seers had seen him there enthroned in state awaiting the moment for his triumphant descent to earth. In this

*By Shirley Jackson Case, 1927, p. 370.

imagery where would Jesus find any suggestion of likeness to himself? He had been a Galilean artisan before he became God's chosen herald of repentance, while at that very moment the apocalyptic figure called 'Son of Man' was in heaven awaiting the opportunity to discharge his messianic functions. How was it possible for Jesus to imagine that the present occupant of that exalted office should be dispossessed in order that the Nazarene reformer might assume the duties of that high functionary? Under these circumstances it is altogether improbable that Jesus had ever called himself the 'Son of Man.' "

This is a type of criticism not infrequently met with, the characteristic of which is this: that it begins by tracing all the deep grooves of circumstance and idea in which men of that time moved, and in which psychologically all men ordinarily *had* to move; and then smoothly concludes that Jesus moved in these grooves too. But the fallacy lies in the simple fact that Jesus was not ordinary. It would seem that every student of the life of Jesus would realize that he himself would not be at pains to be studying that life after nineteen hundred years if Jesus had been ordinary. Instead, the only basis from which intelligent discussion can begin is the recognition that in Jesus one is dealing with supremely creative intellect and imagination. The plainest certainty in regard to Jesus is that he did *not* think as the crowd thought, and did not use terms in the common way. When he took the title of "the Son of Man," he took it because in the tremendous poetry of

his spiritual transvaluation he would make that name suggest a messiahship which brought God's deliverance already into the midst of human life.

Of course the Scribes did not comprehend him. They were only angered the more. They knew that what Jesus said sounded unorthodox. They had that curious way of reverencing God which many men before and since have shared, of holding Him as remote as possible from any expectation of the homely, human things His present touch might do.

But Jesus' purpose was to bring the meaning of God into relationship with every kind of man and into every kind of place.

The next thing he did after he had healed the paralytic and talked to the crowd which followed him out to the shore of the lake, was to attach to himself a man, the very sight of whom was anathema to the Scribes and Pharisees. Of all classes in the community, the most despised was that of the tax-gatherers. There was reason in this, for tax-gathering was regarded as a traitorous selling of oneself for money to the Roman power. "Publicans" was the name given to this class, and it was usually bracketed with another word which showed clearly enough the estimation in which it was held,—"publicans and sinners." Sinners, no doubt, many of them were; but the pious people were so conscious of the general idea of sinfulness, which formed a convenient classification, that they had no eye to see the single human souls.

Jesus did. As he went along, he saw at one of the

city gates a tax-gatherer named Matthew,—or as Mark calls him, Levi. All that the crowd saw was the hated business of the man's hands. Jesus looked at something different and significant in this same man's face. "Follow me,"* he said. Matthew was fascinated exactly as Simon and Andrew and James and John had been. He rose and followed.

Not long after that, Jesus chose out of the growing company of his followers twelve men who should be intimately with him, and to whom he could so communicate his spirit that they should pass it on. One of them was Matthew. The leader of them—at least his name always stands first in the list—was Simon Peter, the big impulsive fisherman who had thrown aside his fishing nets that day by the lake of Galilee to follow Jesus. His brother Andrew was of the twelve, and so were James and John, the other fishermen who were called on the same day with Peter. They had a nick-name, these two, which Jesus gave them. They were so vehement and explosive, so hot in their affections and in their resentments too, that Jesus looked at them one day with that sudden, illumining smile of his which shines through so many of his words, and he called them "the Sons of Thunder." Another man of passionate loyalties was in the group, Simon, who was called Simon the Zealot; from which name it would seem that he had belonged to that party in the nation who believed that life in Israel would never be tolerable till there should be war, and the yoke of

*Mark 2:13.

Rome be broken. Judas Iscariot was another of the twelve. If "Iscariot" means "of Kerioth," then he, alone among the twelve, came from Judæa, where the proud memories of the nation's ancient glory were oldest and most unyielding. He had his own ideas as to what Jesus ought to mean and must mean, and out of the collision of those ideas with a different truth which he could never grasp, tragedy was to grow. Another of the group was Thomas, as different from men like James and John as east is from west, pessimistic where they were sanguine, slow in his expectations, but steadfast and ploddingly faithful. The others were men of whom little is known except their names, Philip and Bartholomew, James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus. They had no brilliant qualities; but they loved Jesus, and they wanted to learn.

To the priests and other people of importance, this company of men gathered out of the common people seemed properly to be negligible. They were irritated when they had to notice them at all. Who was this self-constituted prophet out of Nazareth and who were these nobodies who gathered round him? No genuine prophet had ever come out of Galilee. "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?"* they demanded; and then with contemptuous dismissal they added, "this people who know not the law are cursed."

It is a strange and impressive thing to remember that the name which originally was a title of eminence

*John 7:48, A. V.

has become a byword, and that "pharisee" is now a common noun as a synonym for hypocrite. Some of the Pharisees were hypocrites. They made their religious respectability a cloak for cruelty and callousness in everyday affairs. Against these Jesus spoke words which blazed with indignation. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Woe to you, for you love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market-places. You shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you enter not in yourselves, neither suffer you those that are entering in to enter. You devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Woe unto you, for you are like whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness!"*

That type of Pharisee appears in the forepart of the picture as the writers of the gospels draw it; for the disciples of Jesus naturally looked back afterward upon his enemies with horror. But most of the Pharisees were not like that. Most of them were not bad men. They were good men whose goodness had turned sour. They were stubborn literalists whose obsession with the logic of the past made them stupid to the present

*Matt. 23:23, 6, 7, 13, 14, 27.

and the future. "Every Scribe who has been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus, "is like a man that is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."* But the Scribes and Pharisees generally had no use for the new. Religion must be according to pattern, or it was no religion at all. They were enormously sincere—as sincere as all the ritualists, and believers in the sole efficiency of this or that ecclesiastical succession, have always been. Simply they were blind, and they did not know it. Often they forced Jesus to be stern; but sometimes he looked at them with a humorous amazement. "You blind guides," he said, "who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!"†

With their near-sighted concern for the way things ought to be done, it was inevitable that they lost their sensitiveness to what was done. They had the ordinances of religion, but the contents had leaked out. Mark tells that one day when some of the Scribes and Pharisees saw that certain of the disciples ate bread with defiled, that is, unwashen hands, they found fault. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, except they bathe themselves, they eat not. And many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk

*Matt. 13:52. †Matt. 23:24.

not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with defiled hands?"* Jesus reminded them of the words which Isaiah had spoken in the name of God: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." "You reject the commandment of God," he said, "that you may keep your tradition."‡

And when he had called the multitude to him, he said to them, "Hear me all of you, and understand: There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the multitude, his disciples asked him the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? . . . This he said, making all meats clean. And he said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."§

*Mark 7:3-5. †Mark 7:6-7. ‡Mark 7:8.
§Mark 7:14-23.

He wanted men to understand the searching truth that the great thing to be concerned with is what they are inside, not what they deal with outside. It is not good form, but good intention, that can make an act beautiful and good.

But the Pharisees could not understand that. They were irritated by his unconventionalities. It offended them that Jesus had called, and then included among his closest disciples, a man who had been a tax-gatherer. That fact of itself was enough to condemn Jesus in their eyes.

But worse was to follow. Matthew made a great feast in his house, and he invited all the kinds of people he knew—the kinds which the respectable classes did not want to know. Publicans and sinners, they were all there. And to that feast came Jesus.

To the Pharisees and Scribes this was almost worse than blasphemy. It outraged every form of proper behavior which they believed in. What sort of religious leader was this who did not hold himself above the common crowd? They flung that question at Jesus' disciples, and there is no record that the disciples knew how to answer. But Jesus had an answer which has rung down the years—spontaneous as laughter, gay as a bugle-horn that blows for morning, yet with a devastating finality like the note of trumpets before which the walls of old Jerichos fall down.

It is hard even now to realize the creative newness of that answer of Jesus—hard to realize its newness

because it has so long been quoted that we suppose we have always known it; hard to realize its creativeness because in large part organized religion has gone on blandly indifferent to it, just as though it were not meant to create anything at all. Religion still tends to conduct itself as though good form were the supreme matter of importance, and as though the capacity of being shocked at evil were equivalent to righteousness. It is only brokenly that religion is perceived to be the unreckoning adventure of the valiant spirit; only here and there that men realize that the one place where religion ought to be is out among the irreligious. But that was what Jesus unforgetably proclaimed. Standing in the presence of his hard critics, who made a virtue out of their exclusive association with persons as elect as themselves, he threw their attitude into contrast with the beauty of the truth by the flash of one brilliant sentence. "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

As time goes on, that picture gains increasing vividness. Truly considered, it leaves no room for contradiction. What else but this must every life be like which would have in it some touch of a divine redemption?—like a physician, antiseptic in his own cleanness, yet going where disease is; gentle, approachable, and understanding of the worst and most unlovely need.

*Mark 2:17.

Two more happenings revealed the gulf which was widening between the spirit of Jesus and the ideas of the ecclesiastical leaders. On a Sabbath day, Jesus and his disciples were going through the open country; and as they went, the disciples began to break off some of the heads of ripe wheat which grew along the roadside and to rub out the kernels in their hands. If any objection was to be raised, it might have been supposed that it would be from some one who claimed to own the wheat and objected to having it taken; but that was not so. It was wheat by the road, and for longer than any man knew, the custom had been that wayfarers might satisfy their hunger thus. The objection came from another direction altogether. The Pharisees said that the disciples had broken the law of the Sabbath. That law forbade any work on the Sabbath day. The disciples had reaped grain: to reap grain was to work. They could quote decisions of the rabbis to prove that it was work. Therefore the disciples were guilty of sin, and Jesus as their leader was guilty too.

His answer was very characteristic. Against their clumsy formalism, he made the voice of living experience speak both from the past and from the present. Even on their own favorite ground of tradition, he baffled them. "Did you never read," he said, "what David did, when he was hungry—he, and the men that were with him?"*

They knew in an instant what he was coming to,

*Mark 2:25.

and they stood in offended silence. For this was the tradition of what David did. One day, hard pressed by Saul, hungry and faint, he came with the men who were faithful to him to a shrine of God. No food was there except the holy bread, set on the altar as an offering. In his hour of vital need, with the priest's consent, he took that and gave it to his men. He set aside the most sacred ritual laws imaginable. If the Pharisees objected to the plucking of the grains of wheat on the Sabbath and called it sin, what would they say to this act of David's?

The Pharisees had nothing to say. But their resentment against Jesus was not diminished by the all-too-evident fact that he had moved out of the difficulty in which they tried to put him, and had left them in one instead.

Then Jesus suddenly lifted the whole question into the light of a principle as shining and inescapable as the sun. "The Sabbath," he said, "was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; so that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

There was enough explosive newness in those few words to shatter the whole fabric of the Pharisees' religious system, and they knew it; for their essential belief and teaching put a premium on blind obedience. They insisted that such-and-such was the will of God simply because tradition said so; and tradition went on like a lengthening chain. To challenge the law by the immediate values of life was to them blasphemy.

*Mark 2:27-28.

An awful and inscrutable God had given His commandments; and the more burdensome the commandments were interpreted to be, the more virtue there was in bearing them.

In a single sentence, Jesus set life in a new relationship because he related it to his own utterly different consciousness of what God is and what God wants. "The Sabbath was made for man." In other words, religion is not the edict of a remote and autocratic will: it is the Father's purpose for His children. The way to determine whether anything really is the Father's purpose, and therefore really is religious, is to see whether or not it is producing the kind of life in which the beauty of God appears. "The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." The heart of man at its highest has its own sure intuition of God, and to the touch of this living intuition all customs and commandments must be flexible. Thus religion becomes no longer slavish. It is the joyous spontaneity of the free-born son who shares his Father's spirit.

Such a conception of God and man can be held and kept only by those who truly seek the highest. It cannot be codified into ready-made injunctions. It will not suit the indolent purpose which wants mechanical directions which can be followed without the further trouble of thought. It requires an unflagging willingness to keep the inner spirit so sensitive to God that His living purpose will speak through it. Always the temptation of the ecclesiastical mind is to fall back to the second-hand routine of the Scribes and Pharisees,

and to standardize Christianity, as they standardized Judaism long ago. But wherever the spirit of Jesus is, there the religious consciousness will touch the face of life with the infinite variety of its transfiguration, as the beauty of the earth is touched by the quickening of the winds of Spring.

For all this, however, the men of prominence in Jesus' world had no liking. They continued to suspect him and to count him an unwelcome and disturbing influence because he did not walk in the beaten paths.

Increasingly their opposition was growing dangerous. On another Sabbath Jesus was in the synagogue, and this time there was a man in the congregation who had a withered hand. As soon as some of the Scribes saw that, they watched Jesus. What would he do? Here was another trap which the law spread in his path. The law forbade healings on the Sabbath. Thus had casuistry under the name of religion made the real law of the purpose of God of no effect through its twisted tradition. Even the steady spirit of Jesus flamed into indignation, as he caught the look in the crafty eyes which were bent upon him.

He said to the man with the withered hand, "Stand forth."*

Then speaking straight to the men he knew were watching him, Jesus demanded:

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life or to kill?"†

*Mark 3:3. †Mark 3:4.

Another one of those flashing questions of his which stripped pretenses off, and left the real issue clear and undisguised. There was nothing for them to answer, and they held their peace.

Then Jesus, when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts, said to the crippled man, "Stretch forth your hand." The muscles, which had been helpless, quivered. The hand was stretched out restored.

The Pharisees had made up their minds. They hated Jesus for his refusal to conform to the law as authority laid it down—and privately they hated him still more because he had repeatedly left them nonplussed and foolish in the face of the crowd. They went out and took counsel with the Herodians. Ordinarily they despised the Herodians, but in this contingency even a despised tool might serve their purpose. These were the men who curried favor with Herod and therefore might have political influence. It would be useful to have it suggested to Herod that there was an unruly and disturbing person in his dominions. If Herod became sufficiently suspicious, doubtless they would be rid of Jesus.

So the conspiracy began to brew between ecclesiastics and men-of-the-world which was to continue until it should attain its end at last in the halls of Pilate at Jerusalem.

Jesus understood what the hostility forming against him might some day involve. Looking down the days,

his clear pre-vision saw the threat of shadows on the road. Once when he was challenged as to why his disciples did not keep periods of fasting as the disciples of John the Baptist had done, he spoke, as though to himself, this gravely meditative prophecy,—"The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."* But to his challengers he said: "Can companions of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." And then, with his characteristic way of putting a truth into an illustration which the simplest mind in any crowd could understand, he continued:

"No man sews a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment, else that which should fill it up takes from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. And no man puts new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perishes, and the skins; but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins."†

His message was no mere fragment of novelty to be sewed on to men's old ideas. It was not old wine with its ferment long since past. It was new, and of a nature all its own. It could not be linked with old repressions. Like the joy of men at a wedding must be the joy of those who understood the message of the nearness of God as it had come in him.

*Mark 2:19-20. †Mark 2:21-22.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGION WHICH JESUS LIVED AND TAUGHT

The gospel of Jesus rang with the kind of mastery which could belong only to one who was exultantly assured of that which he proclaimed. To read even the single brief narrative of Mark is to see that fact—see it in every swift glimpse of Jesus, by the lake-side, in the synagogue, among the men who loved him, or before the face of those who made themselves his foes. But it is not enough to see the fact. The profound reason for it, which has already been suggested in the last chapter, needs to be more richly pondered.

That great spiritual seer and interpreter of his Master, the Apostle Paul, wrote once to a congregation of Christians this description of what their religion ought to be—"your life is hid with Christ in God."* He threw a shaft of light then not only upon what might be the experience of the followers of Jesus, but upon what had first been the experience of Jesus himself. His life had been hid in God. Out of the deep wells of his own communion flowed the river of all that he said and did.

It is necessary to understand this if one would understand Jesus at all. The vital meaning of any religion

*Col. 3:3.

which bears his name must trace back to his own religion. His teachings—as already we have begun to see —were not little pools of unrelated thoughts. They issued in a single clear and living stream from one fountain-head—the fountain-head of his supreme perception of the One Whom he called his Father.

That name itself disclosed the first great element in his message. God had had many names—the far *I Am,* who veiled himself in mystery; the Dreadful One; the Eternal; the Almighty King. By some of the prophets of Israel he had been called also, Father; but his Fatherhood was thought of as a relationship to the nation as a whole, and less confidently as a Fatherhood which came close to single human souls. Jesus took that name which had glimmered like a torch through the twilight of men's gropings, and it became a sun which filled the sky. All other thoughts of God must be held subject to that light.

This does not mean that Jesus, when he called God "Father," had lost the hush of reverence with which of old the prophets had approached the awful name of God. There is something deep and still in all his speech concerning Him. Some modern religious teachers have too nearly forgotten this, as when Miss Maude Royden says of Jesus' name for God that "It is almost like a pet name, . . . so endearing, so tender, so familiar, something, if I may venture to put it so, almost more like 'Daddy' than 'Father.' "* But such a description

**Beauty in Religion,* by A. Maude Royden, 1923, p. 132.

of Jesus' attitude lacks the depth and dignity of the truth. He never forgot the majesty of God's moral yea and nay. He never dimmed the fact of God's searching holiness, nor suggested that men might look upon Him jauntily, any more than they may gaze jauntily upon the sun. But his conviction about God was the more rich in its significance because he did keep both elements together—God's vastness, and yet God's nearness too. It was because God was the Holy and Eternal One that the fact of His yearning Fatherhood toward His human children was such a thrilling thing. It was *this* God in whom men might find the amazing enfoldment of a tender and endearing love. "If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."*

But how could Jesus believe that? God is love? The spirit of the universe actually on the side of each struggling human life? Did not the world round him deny that every day? Look at the poor; look at the suffering; look at evil and wretchedness of a thousand kinds! Jesus did look at these things. Nothing appears more convergingly from all the gospel records than the impression of him as never sentimental and softly visionary, but always clear-sighted, poised, and sane. But there was a grander sweep to his perceptions than lesser souls had won. He looked past realism to a deeper reality. As the intuition of a poet reaches out

*Matt. 7:11.

toward a beauty which his whole being thrills with even when he knows that words will only brokenly reveal it, so the spirit of Jesus laid hold upon a certainty of God in which he was sure that the broken facts of life should find at length their unity and their peace. For those who had eyes to see, there should dawn through their world the steady meaning which existed already in the mind of God.

Therefore he taught his disciples to pray what through the centuries since has been called the Lord's Prayer. With extraordinary compactness that prayer expresses both the faith and the purpose of Jesus.

The God upon whose name he bids his disciples call is a God who is in heaven,—the power, that is to say, of an eternal reality from which existence comes and upon which all human lives depend. But God thus in his greatness is not impersonal nor remote. Men may draw near to him as a child draws near to his father, trusting him, confident in his compassion, relying on his love.

This, in a measure, some of the great teachers and saints of Israel had known and taught before Jesus taught it. Through much that was sterile and formal in the national religion, there were also gleams of personal piety and of high religious confidence. But Jesus gave to his disciples not only a teaching, but a surpassing daily testimony. They saw him live a realization of the kind of God to whom he bade them pray. Nor was this all. He linked religion always with its immediate

consequence for conduct; and this consequence is in his prayer. To believe in God must mean first of all to seek God's Kingdom. Men must give life deliberately to God's obedience in order that His will might be done in earth as it is in heaven. All else hinged on this primary dedication to the Kingdom. If men hoped for a world in which all might have their daily bread supplied, they could have it only as their stupidities and their selfishness should be subordinated to the spirit of the loving God. If their sins and follies would be forgiven, they must themselves learn to forgive. If they would be delivered from evil, they must look to God to guide them through temptations. The prayer thus involved a purpose too—the purpose of human energies and ambitions swinging into a new orbit round the accepted sovereignty of "our Father."

The power to believe all that this prayer of Jesus implied could not come to a man through any process of argument. It required not a shrewd mind but a new heart. As objective history, the fourth gospel does not take equal rank with the others, but it does repeatedly interpret the message of Jesus with a deep spiritual understanding. Its account of the conversation with Nicodemus puts into explicit words a truth which lies implied in much else that Jesus said. According to this gospel, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a member of the ruling council of the Jews, came once to Jesus by night to talk with him. He began by referring to extraordinary things which Jesus had done among the people,

on the strength of which Nicodemus found himself compelled to infer that Jesus was a man requiring notice. Quickly Jesus thrust through to a deeper matter. It was not a question of inferring the presence of God from outward signs. It was a question of a more intimate appreciation. "Except one be born anew," he said, "he cannot see the Kingdom of God."* Nicodemus demurred. How could a grown man be born again? But steadily Jesus drove that insistence home. "Marvel not that I said, You must be born anew. The wind blows where it will, and you hear the voice thereof, but you know not whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the spirit."† Who can see the wind or tell where it will blow? Yet with its blowing, the face of the sky and earth is changed. Clouds vanish, and the sunlight floods the world again. So is there a new earth, as of springtime, within a man's soul when the winds of awakening blow from the unseen depths of God.

It is hard for sophisticated and self-complacent people to believe that. In his vivid, illustrative fashion Jesus made this plain one day by something which the disciples could never forget. He did not make a long explanation. He simply called a little child to him while the disciples stood about him. Into the eyes of Jesus the child looked up, trustful and expectant. You cannot enter into the Kingdom, he said, until you become like this. You must be born into the freshness of

*John 3:3. †John 3:8.

a child's belief, and have within you the new heart of expectancy to which no beautiful thing shall seem impossible. And he taught them that if they prayed enough and dwelt enough in God, this miracle of the inner life would come to pass.

In Jesus himself there was revealed the quality which he wanted his disciples to possess. He achieved what almost never is achieved—the grown man's increasing knowledge and experience *without* the smothering of the values of the years which had gone before. He had an immense maturity; but into it he carried also the unspoiled spontaneity which belongs to the blithe spirit of the child. Life was forever beautiful to him and full of exultant possibilities; for the sunlight of his sense of God brought to his man's spirit a brightness like the shining of a child's eyes when it wakes to face the day. He walked among the fields of Galilee where others might have had no eyes for anything except the dusty paths, and his spirit leaped to see the lilies waving in the wheat. He watched the birds, and his heart took wings with them. He stopped to see the children playing in the market-place, and something of their gaiety struck vibrant chords in him. It was a standing offense to the conventional ecclesiastics who could not understand him that he who ought, as they supposed, to be talking solemnly on solemn themes could often be so debonair. He must have smiled a little as he looked at their disapproving faces. They had not been satisfied with John: still less

were they satisfied with him. It could be said to them as to so many sulking children: "We piped unto you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn."* "The Son of Man," he said, "came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! And wisdom is justified by her works."†

There is more than one way of being wise. His was the wisdom which had so entered into the heart of the radiant reality of God that he carried cheer, and created confidence. One night he was with the disciples in a boat on the lake of Galilee when a sudden storm broke. The lake was churned to fury; waves broke over the boat; the disciples were terrified as they saw it filling and apparently about to sink. Through the tumult, Jesus was asleep in the stern of the ship. Desperately they woke him. He looked out untroubled into the howling darkness. "Why are you fearful? Have you not yet faith?"‡ he said. They gazed at him astonished; then in his presence a new courage quickened in their hearts and they fell again to work. Simon Peter never forgot the immense impression of Jesus upon them in that moment of their panic. When they heard him speak, instantly it was as though the world were altered. Long afterward when he came to tell about it to Mark, the writer of the gospel, he saw the whole scene again, and in the midst of it the overpowering figure of his Master. He told Mark that

*Matt. 11:17. †Matt. 11:19. ‡Mark 4:40.

Jesus said to the wind, "Peace, be still," that the wind and the sea obeyed him, and that there came a great calm.

Was there a physical miracle here? Most Christian people have long assumed so. But there are reasons stronger and not less reverent, for assuming something else. It was not the way of Jesus to want to work marvels over nature; rather he worked miracles in men. In the last temptation in the wilderness he had faced and reconciled that instinctive, but crude, human desire which the old Book of Job had left unsatisfied. Give us a God who intervenes according to our prescription and we will believe in God, men said then, and have said since. Let the outer world be obedient to our physical need. But Jesus had another answer. He had it in the wilderness and he kept it through the days to follow. Trust God. Keep your own soul courageous. Let the facts without call out the utmost from your life within. Then neither life nor death can hurt you, for you are linked with the undying purposes of God. In the Garden of Gethsemane at the last he was not to call on any supernatural aid; it is not in keeping with his character that he called for it in the storm. He was not afraid. He made men round him cease to be afraid. When men have lost their fear, and all the power in them is released, they can surmount dangers which a moment before seemed mountainous. Their stature grows, and the perils round them shrink. It was not strange that Peter, tell-

ing what happened that day to the disciples, said that the wind and the sea went down and there came a great calm. It came inside them before it came without.

But is there any substantial comfort in such a faith as this? If in moments of doubt God could be put to the test; if, as the voice said in the wilderness, it could be flatly expected that "he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee,"* and if it could be unfailingly demonstrated that they did—then it would be easy to see that Jesus' message of the dependable Fatherhood of God is something which every one could build upon. But what when the facts are incomplete? What when storms continue to rage, and there wait at the end of the road crosses which are not to be escaped? Can the faith that even then the spirit is victorious over the world, and that through death also life still moves on to life, maintain itself? Can the message of Jesus even *then* remain convincing?

To the barren process of speculation, No. To the bold boast of living, Yes. "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him!"† cried Job, in one heroic moment of his highest intuition. Through the night as well as through the day, the road yet runs to God. The Book of Job is the climactic poetry of the Old Testament; Jesus lifted that poetry into life. Through the changing lights and shadows of the world that is, he walked in the glory of that which his soul was sure must be. The

*Luke 4:10. †Job 13:15.

vindication of his faith is his career, and the undying power of it to make men adopt that same faith and live by it victoriously.

This faith in the dependable God, once grasped by the intuition, becomes the basis on which everything else is built. No outward accidents can shake it. When once it is established, the whole of a man's living rises from it, and rests upon it, in fortitude and strength. Jesus was not speaking of one or another isolated maxim, but speaking rather of this first and crucial foundation of faith in the Fatherhood of God, when he said: "Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall thereof."*

What happens to the human individual in the light of this fact of the lovingness of God? Immediately he assumes an infinite value, since the eternal Goodness which is above him, is seeking the goodness which ought to be in him. Jesus expressed this truth in three parables. In the first of them he said:

*Matt. 7:24-27.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

In the second, he said:

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

And the third was the matchless story which is called the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

"And he said, A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields

to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his

father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."*

These three parables all illustrate the one great truth that the heart of God is forever hungering over the least of His own who may be lost. Their difference is that they suggest the different ways in which human souls may *become* lost. They may wander off, through ignorance, like the lamb bewildered in the darkness when the flock goes back to the fold. They may be lost through circumstances they did not create, like the coin dropped into the corner from which it had no power to come back. Or they may be lost through the deliberate recklessness of evil choice, like the son who turned his back upon his father's house. But in all these conditions equally, the pursuing Goodness follows that which is astray. And the conclusion which Jesus wanted to drive home was this—that only when a man rises up to answer this Goodness which never forgets him no matter how much he may forget, does that

*Luke 15, A. V.

man find the beauty of life which all the time might have belonged to him. Only then does he in the far country "come to himself," and turn home.

What Jesus taught in his parables, he lived. He would make real to all God's sons their worth in their Father's eyes. "The Son of Man came," he said, "to seek and to save that which was lost."* He judged all institutions and customs by the test of life. Did they help make larger and finer men and women, or did they not? If they did, then they would endure; if they did not, then they must either change, or be destroyed. To a group of stubborn ecclesiastics who set up their inflexible Sabbath code as a barrier against his works of healing, he said indignantly, "What man shall there be of you that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep!"*

Not only was a man better than a sheep; he was better than the kind of man he had supposed he was till Jesus showed him what kind of man he could come to be. He changed Simon into Peter by the challenge of his new name, the weak man into the strong man, the reed into the rock. He was to change others in the same way.

One day he had been invited to the house of a Pharisee named Simon, and he sat there with his host at dinner. Into the house, who should come but the

*Luke 19:10. *Matt. 12:11-12.

last and least welcome of all imaginable persons—a woman of the streets. Simon and his respectable company were shocked; but there was a desperate courage in the woman which carried her past all fear of their rebuffs. Straight to the feet of Jesus she went, took an alabaster box of precious perfume, broke it, and poured the perfume upon his feet. The Pharisee's doubts about Jesus hardened into quick hostility. That Jesus could knowingly permit such a woman to touch him never entered into his imagination. Jesus was ignorant, and discredited by his ignorance. "This man," he said, "if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner."*

Jesus knew well enough that she was a sinner. But she was a sinner shriven by her tears. She had recognized in him the symbol of her own lost goodness, and her heart was crying out to regain it. In the look of Jesus' face she had seen the beauty of God, and she had loved it. "Her sins," said Jesus, and he looked round about on Simon and his company, "are many. But they are forgiven, because she loved much." Then he said to her: "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."†

What was her name—this woman who came into Simon the Pharisee's house? Luke does not directly tell; but a little later in his gospel there is something which suggests the answer. He speaks of certain wo-

*Luke 7:39. †Luke 7:47-48, 50.

men who were in the company of those who followed Jesus, and among them was "Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out."* Tradition has linked the two together, Mary of Magdala, and the penitent who wept at Jesus' feet; and the name of Mary has become a symbol for that purity and sweetness which the touch of Jesus could bring again to human souls which had been stained.

There is another incident somewhat similar, but even more dramatic, which is recorded in some manuscripts of the gospel of John. No mention of it is in the other gospels, but it rings with the characteristic accents of Jesus. The group of men who opposed him, and were on the watch for a chance to put an end to him if they could, suddenly found what they thought was an opportunity exactly suited to their purpose. A woman had been accused of adultery. The proof was complete; and the law was explicit. She must be sentenced to death. The crafty idea flashed upon them—take her to Jesus for the sentence. He must refuse, and thereby show in the most certain fashion a contempt for the law which should make him also guilty; or he must have the odium of pronouncing the woman's death. It was a crafty trap. Either way he sprung it, he must be caught.

With an evil mask of pretended deference, they came to him, bringing the woman. "Teacher," they said, "this woman hath been taken in adultery—in the

*Luke 8:2.

very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What then sayest thou of her?"*

He said nothing at all. He stooped down and wrote with his finger in the dust.

There was an uneasy silence. What was he writing? He had an uncomfortable way of knowing inconvenient things.

He stood up again, straight and still. He swept the hard-faced circle with his eyes. He looked at them—he seemed to look *through* them—till they began to flinch. Then he spoke. Pointing to the woman, but with his eyes fixed upon their faces, he said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."† Then again he stooped down and wrote upon the ground.

The circle stirred and started, like a sudden thaw of ice: then broke—fell suddenly to pieces,—drifted away.

Jesus was left alone with the woman, standing rooted to the spot where they had left her. When he lifted himself up again, and saw that the place was empty, he said to her: "Woman, where are they? Did no man condemn thee?" She answered, "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee," he said. "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."‡

The trap was broken. Something higher than law had entered in. The love of God had claimed its own, and love should be redeeming.

On another day he was passing through a town

*John 8:5. †John 8:7. ‡John 8:10-11.

where a great crowd filled the road to see him. There was a man named Zacchæus there, a tax-gatherer. The people hated him for his profession—with the indiscriminate and emphatic hatred which they had for tax-gatherers generally. Furthermore, they laughed at him because he was very short. In order to see Jesus at all he had had to climb up into a tree. The last man that Jesus might have been expected to notice was Zacchæus. What possible interest could this wretched little tax-gatherer have for him?—the crowd would have said. But Zacchæus was the one man Jesus singled out. "Zacchæus," he said, "make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."* Zacchæus was overjoyed; but the people were astonished. There was a great wagging of tongues.

"Gone to Zacchæus' house."

"Zacchæus of all people!"

"A man that is a sinner!"

The striking thing was that Zacchæus was not nearly so much of a sinner as the rough-and-ready notion of the crowd supposed. He was shy and lonely and unhappy. The one thing he hungered for was somebody to believe in him, somebody to encourage him to be good in spite of his bad name. At the touch of Jesus, he blossomed like a flower. "Behold, Lord," he said, "the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold."†

*Luke 19:5. †Luke 19:8.

Yet though the interest of Jesus thus went out to notable sinners and to other people who needed him conspicuously, it would be wrong to let it appear that his interest was exclusively for these. If he liked to take bad men and make them good, so also he liked to take good men and make them better. His way of doing it was spontaneous, like his spirit. He never drove; he drew. He first saw, and then he helped men themselves to see, how much bigger and more beautiful their lives could be when they let God's changing love come in. He said that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust";* and he himself, as the Son who understood his Father, spread above all men whom he could reach, the sky of an encouragement which would help them grow.

When they had once seen and desired their possible diviner selves, Jesus knew that people would not need elaborate rules of behavior. When they felt themselves children of God, they could instinctively begin to act as such. Their lives would be clean because their hearts were clean. That is the simple but tremendous expectation which underlies all the teaching recorded in the gospel of Matthew in the long passage called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus did not hammer at precepts; he held up one supreme ideal. Interpreted literally, and squeezed into a code, it would be unthinkable; caught by the far vision of religious intuition it

*Matt. 5:45.

becomes a flaming star to steer by. "Ye therefore shall be perfect," he said, "as your heavenly Father is perfect."* See the meaning of God's best in you; and you will need no further light to show you the things you must not stoop to and the things to which you want to rise.

Here is the explanation too of the difficult teaching about forgiveness and about love. To the ordinary mind, it has always seemed not only difficult but impossible. How could Jesus be followed when he asked anything so contrary to human nature as this?

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."†

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you."‡

It *was* contrary to human nature, and still is. There is no doubt of that. But in that very fact is the key to understanding. For what Jesus assumed as the basis of men's illimitable possibilities is the supplanting of the

*Matt. 5:48. †Matt. 5:38-42. ‡Matt. 5:38-44.

ordinary human nature by a new nature. Those who are born into the mind and spirit of their Father will begin to move on the level of a diviner freedom, rising now above the ordinary inhibitions as the soaring eagle rises above the fences on the ground. To try to turn Jesus' words into a worried literalism is to break the wings of the thrilling symbolism by which they become life-giving. They cannot be cramped into formulas for a reluctant loyalty to obey. Legalistic definitions turn them into a fantastic and intolerable load; but imagination can find in them the flaming lift of new desire. Either men understand this, or else they do not; and the thing which will determine it is whether they have wanted, or have not wanted, to be born anew into the consciousness of God. As Paul the Apostle said, only spiritual men discern spiritual things.

When the spiritual man appears, it is possible to see then what the power of love can do. Average people plod in the ruts of their little prudences. They make no eager-hearted venturings beyond the range of their practical calculations. They believe in giving justice, and very particularly they believe in getting it. They will do for others what they must, or what they feel they ought to, but without much emotion beyond a decent satisfaction in their duty. They go out to meet a friend; but in the presence of an enemy they shut themselves within the walls of a narrowly watchful hatred. As a result, their lives may be safe, but only be-

cause their scope is small. They may never be hurt by risks without: but subtly and unconsciously they are poisoned by the stagnant emotions within. In contrast to such, the man of the spirit is as the free man to the slave. He will not wear the fetters of any grudge or fear. Not only of that little part of life which brings him obvious advantage, but of *all* life, he will dare to take possession in the name of God.

Thus did Paul. "Necessity is laid upon me,"* he said. Very well, he would make a friend of necessity. There were men whom his cause antagonized; he would widen his own spirit to understand, and if possible to include, these who were antagonistic. "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some."† He was confronted often by malice and falsehood; but he tried to live the ideal of which he wrote:—"Love is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth. Love never faileth."‡

Thus lived Francis of Assisi; and thus, in the mountain sanctuary of Alverna, at the end of his life he prayed:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I ask of Thee before I die; the first, that in my lifetime I may feel, as far as possible, both in my soul and body, that pain which Thou, sweet Lord, didst endure in the hour of Thy most bitter Passion; the second, that I may feel in my heart as much as possible of that excess of love

*I Cor. 9:16. †I Cor. 9:22. ‡I Cor. 13.

by which Thou, O Son of God, wast inflamed to suffer that cruel Passion for us sinners."*

All down the years, and in the present no less than in the past, there have been men and women who caught the meaning of Jesus and lifted some true reflection of it in the torches of their own lives. Alice Freeman Palmer, President of Wellesley College and one of the pioneers of education in America, when she was a young teacher in a difficult place, underpaid and overworked, wrote in her letters home concerning the girls she was teaching:

"Looking on and into them, I said, I will try to be a friend to them *all,* and put all that is truest and sweetest, sunniest and strongest that I can gather into their lives . . . God help me to give what He gave —myself—and make that self worth something to somebody; teach me to love all as He has loved, for the sake of the infinite possibilities locked up in every human soul. . . . Whenever they want help or comfort, my door and heart shall be open. Not that I have said this. I have just felt it, and I think they feel it too . . . Christianity meets the wants of every heart; only it takes experience, knowledge of and insight into human nature—but far more than anything else, the spirit of Christ himself—in order to know when and how to speak. Why, what is it to be a Christian, a Christ-follower, unless it is going about doing good?

**The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi,* trans. from the Italian and edited by Rt. Rev. H. E. Manning, D.D., T. W. Foulis, London, 1915, p. 178.

We ought to love everybody and make everybody love us. Then everything else is easy."*

On the morning of October 11th, 1915, Edith Cavell, a British Red Cross nurse in Belgium, was executed by a German firing-squad for having helped British prisoners to escape from occupied Belgium across the Dutch frontier; and the chaplain who was with her on the night before, has left this witness. "She said: 'But this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness toward any one.' "

In an essay on *Magnanimity,* by Harry E. Fosdick, there is recorded this:

"In the course of the Armenian atrocities a young woman and her brother were pursued down the street by a Turkish soldier, cornered in an angle of the wall, and the brother was slain before his sister's eyes. She dodged down an alley, leaped a wall, and escaped. Later, being a nurse, she was forced by the Turkish authorities to work in the military hospital. Into her ward was brought, one day, the same Turkish soldier who had slain her brother. He was very ill. A slight inattention would insure his death. The young woman, now safe in America, confesses to the bitter struggle that took place in her mind. The old Adam cried, 'Vengeance'; and the new Christ cried, 'Love.' And, equally to the man's good and to her own, the better

**The Life of Alice Freeman Palmer,* by George Herbert Palmer, p. 75.

side of her conquered, and she nursed him as carefully as any other patient in the ward. The recognition had been mutual and one day, unable longer to restrain his curiosity, the Turk asked his nurse why she had not let him die, and when she replied, 'I am a follower of him who said "Love your enemies and do them good," ' he was silent for a long time. At last he spoke: 'I never knew that there was such a religion. If that is your religion tell me more about it, for I want it.' "*

Such witnesses as these forbid that the challenge of Jesus should be ignored. His ideal of an all-daring and therefore all-conquering love is the part of Christianity which, for the most part—to borrow Chesterton's revealing epigram—"has not been tried and found wanting, but has been found difficult and not tried." But *when* it has been tried, what then? It has reached beneath the timid rationality by which most lives are governed. It has waked deep instincts and awarenesses —waked those deeps in human personalities which the old religion and the new psychology both have perceived to hold the secret of exultant living. It has produced the great Lovers of mankind, who in their radiant freedom from self-concern have revealed the wideness of experience to which the human spirit can move out.

Jesus trusted to the power of the spirit which he himself knew and which others were to learn from him. He moved through Galilee with no outward au-

*Twelve Tests of Character, by H. E. Fosdick, 1923, p. 166.

thority. He knew that the ruling classes were hostile to him. He seemed to have nothing on his side,—except the invisible influence of a colossal faith. But that was enough. He went serene and confident through the midst of opposition. He stood untroubled when others were afraid. He, and those who learned his secret, should be the makers and the masters of the future. "Ye are the salt of the earth," he said. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid."*

The astonishing thing is that nineteen centuries have not been able to obliterate that light he set upon a hill. This man out of Nazareth, with a calmness which still seems incredible, said that the fundamental assumptions which the whole human race had lived by were leading life down a wrong road—a road which could lead only to disaster and to doom. His own contemporaries were blind to this conception which he set before them. They were in the grip of a growing passion of hatred against the rule of Rome—a hatred which they thought to satisfy presently in some great day of vengeance, but which in fact was hurrying them blindly on to the horror that was presently to come in the siege of Jerusalem and its destruction. They thought that they could conquer evil by the sword, and prevail over old violence by setting up a new one. But Jesus saw that this returning path of blood which the world had been following so long

*Matt. 5:13, 14.

could never lead to any end. He would show another road—he in his own spirit would *be* that road. Men could only triumph over their enemies as they included their enemies also in a new vision of redemption for all the earth.

The passions of human nature have lifted their defiance against him. With hate and strife and war, one generation after another has poured its scorn upon the idea that a religion of love has any serious place in the world's affairs. But at length, and more and more, the ancient pride of violence is hesitant and unsure. It does not appear so certain that the worth-while values of life can be won or kept that way. What if, after all, the Cæsars and the Herods, the kings and conquerors, the plunderers and despoilers, do *not* possess the secret which can make men or nations great? What if in this world's actual affairs the only hope of avoiding a deepening darkness of disaster is to remember what the steady voice in Galilee said should be the spirit by which alone the world could find its light?

CHAPTER VII

A DISTURBING GOSPEL

Some time after the first period of his ministry in and around Capernaum, Jesus went to Nazareth. Capernaum was the larger place, nearer the crossroads of the life of the province, and therefore a centre of influence more important; but Nazareth was home. There he had been brought up. There lived his mother, his brothers, and his sisters. There were the men and women who were linked with his first boyish memories.

It was a Sabbath when he came back. He would find everybody together on that day. Into the familiar synagogue he went, where he had been on innumerable Sabbaths for as long as he could remember. There he had listened to the voice of the leader as he read from the law and the prophets; there his kindling imagination had wondered and dreamed of greater messages in those old words than the faces of his neighbors seemed to show. "As his custom was," he came in through the well-known doors, and sat down in his place. But he was a marked man now. The report of what he had said and done in Capernaum had preceded him. The leader of the synagogue called on him to read.

Jesus stood up and took the roll of the writings of the prophets. He turned to the prophecy of Isaiah and he read:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."*

He closed the roll, and gave it again to the leader. There was silence, and the eyes of the whole congregation were fastened upon him. Why had he read that particular prophecy? What did he mean for them to think?

Then he began to speak. "To-day," he said, "is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

They wondered all the more what he meant. A whispering spread through the congregation. Some of them were frankly delighted at the way in which he spoke. There he was, the same Jesus they had known as man and boy, with the winning, gracious way of him which they had missed in Nazareth now for many a day. But there were others—and more—with a different feeling. Who was he that he should be there in the synagogue instructing them? He had been out in the world a little while and had come back thinking that he knew more than his home town. Joseph's son,—why should they listen to him?

*Luke 4:18-19.

Jesus looked at them. With that quick perception by which he always read the things men's expression betrayed, he knew what they were thinking. He went on:

"Doubtless you will say to me this parable,—Physician, heal thyself. Do here in your own country all the things we hear you have been doing in Capernaum."

Well, that was what they *were* thinking. If all these things reputed in Capernaum had actually happened, why didn't he do something startling here at home?

A new note came into his voice:

"I tell you of a truth," he said, "there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when no rain fell for three years and six months, and there came a great famine over all the land. But unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to a widow in Sarepta, a city of Sidon. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."*

The congregation in the synagogue caught the point instantly. God's favors, he said, had been given repeatedly to outsiders. The people who expected them had not been fit for them. So that was what he thought of Nazareth!

The service broke up in confusion. Men crowded angrily round Jesus to thrust him out of the city. There were some who suggested that they take him up to

*Luke 4:23-26.

the top of a cliff above the town and throw him down. But for all the clamor, they did not quite dare to touch him. There was something in his bearing which cleared a space about him; and he went his way.

He went out of Nazareth, apparently never to come back. His own people would not hear him. They were held captive by their own conceit of self-sufficiency. The deliverance which belonged to the eager-hearted he could not bring to them.

It may have been shortly after this day in Nazareth —or, as for some reasons seems even more probable, it may have been a little while before—that some of Jesus' family came looking for him in Capernaum. He was in a house there and the message was brought to him that his mother and his brothers were outside. He learned quickly why they had come. They had become frightened at what—in their eyes—was his dangerous notoriety. Here he was gathering crowds about him, speaking incredible heresies, antagonizing the Pharisees, making it possible that at any moment Herod might seize him as a disturber. And his family, too. If he kept on, what might not happen to them? At all costs they must try to silence him, to take him home,—anything to change the situation. He was beside himself, they said. They would go and try to make him listen to them.

So the word was brought to Jesus, "Thy mother and thy brothers without seek for thee."

"Who is my mother or my brothers?" he said.

Then he looked round about on those who sat listening to him, and he said: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother."*

Later on, some of these who by blood were nearest to him were to belong to the spiritual family who shared his purpose. One of his brothers, James, was to become a leader in the Christian fellowship. But not yet. He had to endure the loneliness of estrangement from his own. He had to know supremely, as lesser witnesses for God in their measure have known in all the centuries, that they who undertake a divine commission may have to walk solitary on ways where they thought they would walk accompanied by love. Old echoes out of his own experience may have been sounding when he said later to his disciples, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."†

The family of the sons of God should be a reality more great and more inclusive than any human bond. There was a higher birthright in the light of which alone the relationships of earth could find significance. Jesus knew this for himself. His own consciousness of God transfigured for him the whole meaning of existence. The passion of his desire was to help all men know what he supremely knew. If once they understood the glory of their spiritual sonship, then immediately the promises of the prophets, which had been treated as something far off and unsubstantial, would

*Mark 3:35. †Matt. 10:36.

be fulfilled in their own amazed experience. Then actually it would be true, as he said in Nazareth, that the year of the Lord should have come—that the blind should see; that those who had crawled and limped should walk; that those who had been the captives of their fears, and sins, and limitations, should be set free.

A second occasion in these early days of the Galilean ministry called out from him another expression of his purpose which is of equal significance with what he said in Nazareth. One day, two disciples of John the Baptist came to him with a message from their master. John, as we have remembered, had been imprisoned by Herod. His own career was at an end. Any day the door of his prison might open to reveal the executioner waiting on the other side. But was there nothing left? Was his prophecy also a failure and Messiah not yet come? He had heard of Jesus preaching in Galilee; heard of the crowds that gathered round him. He had believed that Jesus might be the promised One. But where were any signs of conquering greatness? What was there in anything that Jesus was doing which showed that the awful day of God's deliverance might be at hand? Somehow from his prison John managed to send a message to his friends.

"Go," he said, "to Jesus, and ask him, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?"

Here spoke the same question which had come to Jesus in the wilderness and which had come to him

again when he first heard that John was imprisoned. Could any great deliverance in the name of God be worked in a way different from the expected one? Unless Messiah came with a sword, there was no evident salvation.

But Jesus had no sword. He had met and answered that allurement in the wilderness. To the eyes of the world, his hands were empty. The power which they held was something that only the eyes of faith could see. When men believed in the spirit of God which shone through him, then, and only then, might his touch open for them the doors into the Kingdom of the promised life.

"Go your way," he said to the messengers, "and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."*

He knew that many *would* be offended. That was the pitifulness of the great distance which had to be between his vision and that of lesser men. A few sick folk healed, a few miracles wrought among the obscure, and sermons preached to the common people, would seem to many only the pale shadow of the deliverance which their world cried out for. But above that pathos of their lack of understanding, Jesus' assurance rose unshaken. He could dispense with the spec-

*Luke 7:22, 23, A. V.

tacular. Through the regeneration of single souls by the message of the life of God, and by the inconspicuous miracle of these obscure human individuals set free into the gospel of a larger hope, as he preached his Father's divine purpose for even the lowliest life, the Kingdom of God must be made possible. A world regenerated could not be built by machinery from without. It had to grow in the midst of souls remade within. Those who were looking for signs would be disappointed. Only those who had an eye for the invisible could understand what he was about.

Then when the messengers had gone, Jesus turned to the people round him and he said, concerning John:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Or a man clothed in soft raiment? They that are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But did you go out to see a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a prophet; for among them that are born of women there is none greater than John. Yet he that is but little in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."*

A superb tribute, that, to John!—John the rugged, the inflexible, the heroic witness to the truth he saw. In the native power possible to a human being, no man born had been greater than he. And yet, said Jesus, he that was little in the Kingdom of God should be greater than the mighty John.

With this contrast which Jesus drew between John

*Luke 7:24-28.

the prophet and those who should belong to the Kingdom of God, there shines a further light upon his conception of the Kingdom. John had seen the need of human life for moral cleansing. Out of his impassioned sense of the holiness of God, he had declared that the time must be at hand when God would establish a Kingdom of his own will and purpose. But John apparently saw the Kingdom as something suddenly and completely to be accomplished by a dramatic cataclysm of heavenly interference. He was a lonely voice and a lonely soul. Coming as he did out of the desert, he viewed men from without. He did not enter into them in sympathetic understanding, that he might see the possibility of the Kingdom already beginning to come to pass.

But to Jesus the Kingdom was not only future. It *was* future in the sense that only God could fully establish it. But in another sense it was also present. The Kingdom was already in the midst of men, and he himself, in his tremendous personal consciousness that his Father was working through him, was the centre of it. The Kingdom was a fellowship, the redeeming spirit of which was shared by all those who were drawing together round him in the power of a new experience. What to John was only a passionate expectation, to those within the Kingdom was already, in some measure at least, a present consciousness. And that was why even he who should be little in the Kingdom of God should be greater than John.

It was about this time that Jesus told those parables of the Kingdom which have been preserved, some in two, and some in all three, of the earliest gospels. So important were they, and so unforgetable, that even in the swift, short narrative of Mark they are included.

In the first of these he described a sower going out to sow a field. As he sowed, some of the scattered seed fell by the wayside, and birds flocked down and devoured it. And some fell on rocky ground where it had not much earth, and though it sprang up quickly in that thin soil, it was scorched when the sun shone on it, and because it had no depth of earth and no real root, it withered away. And some seed fell among the thorns, and these grew up and choked it, so that it yielded nothing. And other seed fell into good ground, and yielded fruit, growing and increasing and bringing forth some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold. Then said Jesus: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The twelve were puzzled at first by this method of setting forth truth in a story, but Jesus told them that thus in parables must his message be expressed. "Unto you," he said, "is given the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But unto them that are without, all things are done in parables, that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and that hearing they may hear, and not understand."* That is to say, the gospel of God could not be forced upon the careless and the inattentive. It could only be given to those whose desire made them

*Mark 4:11.

sensitive to understand. To those who had no eyes to see, all facts about the Kingdom were a "mystery"; but to the open-eyed, the commonest scenes of everyday were full of the significance of God.

Then he gave them the interpretation of the parable.

"The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; and when they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them. And in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble. And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And those are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."*

The disciples could never forget that parable. The material in the gospel of Mark is supposed to have come from Peter,—gathered by the young evangelist from what he heard the apostle tell of his memories of the days when he walked with Jesus. As Peter recalled that parable, he may have visualized again the familiar

*Mark 4:14-20.

and commonplace scene which Jesus suddenly clothed with the great meanings of God—the throng of people on the shore where Jesus taught, and yonder, where he pointed, a ploughed field, and a man's figure silhouetted against the sky as he went along the furrows sowing grain. So is the Kingdom of God, as when seed is sown in the earth,—the seed of the spirit of God in the soil of a man's heart. And the heart must give it genuine lodgment. For some "receive it with joy, but have no root in themselves; and so endure but for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble."* How often, in the days of his shallow-rooted enthusiasms and his bitter failures, Peter had remembered that!

Two other similar parables also he recalled and told to Mark.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. For the earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

"And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds

*Mark 4:17.

that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

"And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it."*

In these three parables the fundamental suggestions are the same. The communication of a new life which marks the Kingdom is a gift from God. Nothing which a man can do creates it. It is the intuition of his sonship, born in him from above. It contains within itself the living mystery of growth and fruitfulness. All that it demands is a heart made ready, and kept right, for the seed to take root and flourish. The hard ground of indifference must be broken up, the stones of old refusals cleared away, the brambles of a deceitful worldly-mindedness cut down, the birds of idle thinking, as far as may be, driven off. A man must do his best to make himself fit ground for the seed to grow in. But along with that challenge to a faithful earnestness, Jesus gave a still deeper message. Long before the modern psychologists devised new names for old truths, Jesus had understood and used those truths. He saw the barrenness of the mere, tense human will; he saw the irresistible and quiet power of the divine suggestion. Once the seed-conception of the grace of God had really taken lodgment in a man's consciousness, then he could go on his way with a

*Mark 4:26-32.

song. As he slept, and rose, and went about his business night and day, the seed would spring and grow up, "he knoweth not how." The goodness within him would blossom of itself. The mustard seed of the new intuition should be great enough to grow into a tree, under the branches of which all the powers of a man's life should find their lodgment.

In other parables Jesus sought to convey to his hearers his sense of how incomparably precious the spirit of God in a man's soul could be. Out of his own experience he spoke. For him God was the supreme and shining fact in the light of which all life grew radiant. He felt that he drew on infinite resources, and rested his strength on an illimitable strength. And he saw that to human existence as a whole transfigurement might come if men could seize within their grasp this knowledge that the Eternal Spirit was on their side, that an unflagging love was reaching out to claim them, that one by one their lives and all their everyday ambitions *counted* in the eyes of God.

He shaped his parables out of illustrations familiar and vivid to every one who heard him. In Palestine, which for centuries had been the battle-ground of marching armies, and over which wave after wave of invasion had swept, innumerable people at one time or another had had to flee before the terror of destruction. They could not carry their possessions with them. They dug holes hastily and buried such treasure as they had; and often in the fortunes of war many never

came back to that buried treasure any more. Always for men in Palestine there was the thrill of imagining that in any field a plough might uncover riches. So they caught the glamour in Jesus' words when he said:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."*

There where the caravan routes came in from the east, and where men met in the bazaars, they caught also the kindling meaning of his picture when he said:

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."†

One day there came a young man, running eagerly to overtake him as he went with the disciples along the road. "Good master," he cried, "good master! What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" said Jesus. "There is none good but one, that is, God. You know the commandments: do not commit adultery; do not kill; do not steal; do not bear false witness; defraud not; honor your father and mother."

"Master," he answered, "all these things have I observed from my youth."‡

Then Jesus, as he looked at him, loved him. Here was one who might seize the pearl of great price.

*Matt. 13:44. †Matt. 13:45. ‡Mark 10:18-20, A. V.

"One thing you lack," he said. "Go sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." But the young man was very rich. He could not bear to let his possessions go. The pearl was there before him—the incomparable pearl of fellowship with Jesus in the intimacy of his chosen group: but he could not bring himself to make the great exchange. Torn within himself and sad, he went away.

Jesus looked round about on the disciples, standing there silent and awed. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" he said.

They were astonished, and showed it; so he made his words more plain. "You children," he said, as he looked at their big, solemn faces, wide-eyed and puzzled, like so many slow-witted boys. "Do you not see how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God?" And then he confronted them with one of those staggering metaphors of his which would leave no doubt as to the reality of what he was saying. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."*

What did he mean? They still were amazed. Rich and important people to find it as hard to come into the Kingdom as a great, clumsy camel to squeeze through a needle's eye! A man who had kept all the commandments not to find the way to life! They

*Mark 10:24.

were yet infants in spiritual understanding, and only gradually they came to see what Jesus meant—that the Kingdom of God can never be attained until a man desires God more than any other imaginable satisfaction, and that it is desperately hard for a rich man to hunger after God when he has so much which makes him think he is satisfied already. The human odds are heavy: the only hope is for the heavenly grace itself to come in, despite the barrier of things. "With men," said Jesus, "it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."*

Again in a parable he came back to this truth, that the only real riches are the riches of the Kingdom, and that no man may gain anything enduring save through a new relationship of his life to God. "The ground of a certain rich man," he said, "brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee: and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."†

In contrast to the imagined, but false, security of the

*Mark 10:27. †Luke 12:16-21.

man who trusts in his selfish worldliness, he set the joyous liberty of those who had learned the glory of religious confidence. They had adjusted their choices to the central fact, and all lesser things would swing into harmony round its bright control. They moved in their Father's world. They were heirs to a happiness which no outward chance could put at hazard. "Be not anxious for your life," he said, "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

*Matt. 6:25-34.

The Kingdom of God, as that new era when God's will should be done and men for the first time should find the full meaning of their life in oneness with His Spirit, was not merely a future event, to be looked for on the horizon. Men need not say lo, here, or lo, there, and gaze into the distance after portents and signs. The Kingdom of God was *there* as a promise in their midst. Its consummation should come with enlarging glories, but its life already could be known and shared.

"Fear not, little flock," he said; "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." *

It has been said that modern civilization could not have been built upon any such foundation as the words of Jesus. That may be true. Quite imaginably it is also true that what could be built upon his words would be a better thing than modern civilization is. What with its greed and restlessness, its clutching after things that crumble in the hands, its tramplings upon the many by the few who struggle to what they call success, its wars and desolations, its disillusionments and its cynicisms, modern civilization has not yet demonstrated itself to be the supreme achievement of the human soul. By a curious compulsion, practical men are finding their thoughts drawn back to the so-called impractical Jesus. May it actually appear that much of our organized life has been moving in the wrong direction, on a road which is the more futile as the more frenzied grows the haste with which it is pursued? "Make money, pile up possessions, count men and nations great ac-

*Luke 12:32.

cording to the greatness of their commercial assets, and behold, you are confident, and content. Blessed are ye!" But moments come when that beatitude rings false. Something haunting, and it may be inescapable, sounds in those other beatitudes which still ring with the accents of him who spoke them. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peace-makers. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Rejoice *ye,* and be exceeding glad!"*

*Matt. 5:3-12.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOSTILE FORCES GATHER

The beatitudes of Jesus begin and end with difficulty. The blessedness of life should come through spiritual conflict; not through its avoidance. When he taught that, he knew whereof he spoke. His own spirit had had to rise to meet the difficulties which were multiplying as his ministry went on.

The Sabbath in Nazareth showed that conventional people would be against him. The Scribes and Pharisees of Galilee were plainly hostile. Now hostility was to come from a more ominous quarter. The fame of him had spread beyond the borders of the province. It had reached the authorities at the centre. A deputation of Scribes came down from Jerusalem to watch him. They listened, no doubt, to the voluble opinions which their indignant colleagues of Galilee poured into their ears. They saw Jesus himself. Then they gave their summary and scornful verdict. They said he had a devil.

The answer of Jesus was so terrific that it has carried down the years a kind of shuddering fascination. He made plain first the fatuousness of their glib explanation of his influence. Satan cast out Satan! How can a kingdom be divided against itself and stand?

How will a man cast himself out of his own house? But they were guilty of something worse that silliness. They had debauched those deepest intuitions of good and evil, which God has given to the human conscience. "Verily I say unto you," he said, "all their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."*

It was not that he resented what they said as an insult personal to him. He was far too great for that. But he saw with blazing certainty the eternal moral distinctions which were at stake. And he who could be so infinitely gentle had also that awful steadfastness of the truth of God which made cheap, compromising words impossible. Then men must know that when deliberately they turned darkness into light and goodness into evil, they put their souls in peril. *That* is what the sin against the Holy Spirit means,—not the unwilling faults with which unbalanced persons sometimes torment themselves, but only that wilful prostitution of the truth for mean and envious purposes, by which a soul may make itself at length incapable of recognizing God.

From the time of this collision with the Scribes from Jerusalem, two contrasting possibilities became the more sharply etched for Jesus.

*Mark 3:28-29.

The first was the mighty vision which flamed through all his first ministry in Galilee. Israel would respond to the message he was bringing. The age-long dream of all the prophets should be justified. A nation should show itself fit for the Kingdom of God; and in a new era of reborn men, the old world of wickedness should be made into the redeemed world of righteousness and peace.

Our best attempts can only adumbrate that vision. We are not great enough of mind and soul to see what Jesus saw; and therefore, for the most part, we do not feel it as a thrilling possibility. Yet even in our own experience there are guides which might help our imagination to conceive at least dimly what Jesus conceived—a people so transformed in spirit that very literally the earth should be transformed. At the end of the World War, when Woodrow Wilson went to Europe, there was a trembling expectancy among the common people of many lands. A spirit was alive which made it at least thinkable that with sufficient response to the idealism struggling here and there into expression, the ancient madnesses of hate and war might give way to a new sanity of help and healing. Still more recently in India the vast influence of Mahatma Gandhi has borne witness to a hunger latent in human souls for one in whom they see a message of salvation. These things are hints of what the far greater consciousness of Jesus may have envisaged. When he said, "The kingdom of God is at hand," he meant

that its illimitable possibilities trembled upon the very threshold of men's awareness and of their choice. Israel, long dreaming of her spiritual destiny, might fulfil it now by a transfigurement of spirit which all the restless and heart-hungry peoples of the world might rise to welcome and reflect. If that had happened, the course of human history would have been different, from that day to this.

But against this first possibility, Jesus had to reckon with another. The attitude of the Scribes from Jerusalem showed the kind of resistance to spiritual things of which men were capable. It might be that his vision would be rejected. It might be that he himself would have to go down to defeat. The intuition which had come to him in the wilderness came again. Out of the future stretched a shadow that might be the shadow of a cross.

The gospels give only faint indications of times and sequences. Even the earliest, and on the whole the most ordered of them, that of Mark, though it may embody the recollections of one of Jesus' own disciples, embodies them as scenes in a story of which Mark did not have any continuous thread. He remembered what Peter told him, now one day and now another, and he put these memoranda down; but which thing came when, he did not always know. He uses with curious frequency an adverb which sounds as though it were a direct reflection of that swift and vivid movement which the life of Jesus must have had for Peter's

breathless interest. "Straightway" this, and "straightway" that, he writes; but what the exact relation was of the things which happened thus "straightway," we cannot tell. Neither do the gospels of Matthew and Luke give any further help, for they are obviously dependent for their general chronology on Mark; nor is the gospel of John of value on this point, unless it be true—as is probable—that it is correct in its indication that the ministry of Jesus lasted not one year only, but three. Yet though there thus is much that is not certain, the gospel of Mark, nevertheless, does give indications that there were turning-points where the life of Jesus passed definitely from one phase to another.

Such was the period following the coming of the Scribes from Jerusalem. It was evident now that the opposition to Jesus might at any moment become critical. Their influence might drive Herod to another of his half-reluctant cruelties. He was afraid of Jesus. When the men who had his ear told him of the following which Jesus had in Galilee, his uneasy conscience harried him with superstitious spectres. He said, "It is John whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."* But for all his partial cowardice, Herod could work in the dark. Jesus knew of what sort he was. When he said, "Go tell that fox,"† he read the facts as they were, and he knew that if his ministry was not to be cut short, it was wise not to move too

*Mark 6:16. †Luke 13:32.

much in Herod's dominions. Therefore the background of Mark's narrative begins to change. Jesus is seen now not altogether in Galilee, as before. He goes much into the country to the east of the lake, which was outside of Herod's jurisdiction. He made at least one journey of some length into the regions of Tyre and Sidon. Herod or no Herod, he did come at times into Galilee; but he came watchfully, and not for long sojourns.

Of this period the gospels record incidents some of which are not easy to interpret, but all of which are important.

The first of these is the story of a healing in the country of Gadara. Jesus had rowed across the lake with the disciples, moved apparently by that same wish which he expressed at another time when he said, " 'Come ye apart into a desert place and rest awhile,' —for there were many coming and going."* But it was not rest that awaited him. The boat had no sooner touched the shore than there appeared a madman, a terrifying creature so wild that when he was bound with chains he had broken them to pieces. "No man had strength to tame him,"† says Mark, "and always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones." He came screaming toward Jesus, as horrible an apparition as the disciples had ever seen. It is not likely than any of them were left in a frame of mind which

*Mark 6:31, A. V. †Mark 5:4-5.

would make it possible for them to give a cool and precise description of what happened. This is the account as Mark received it:

"When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him, and crying out with a loud voice, he saith, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not. (For he said unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man.) And he asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto him, My name is Legion; for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there on the mountainside a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep into the sea, in number about two thousand, and they were drowned in the sea."*

The account would seem to be colored unconsciously by the disciples' instinctive ideas. The supposition that insane people were possessed by devils was one which everybody in that time took for granted; and the conversation between the devils and Jesus was the highly pictorial form in which they described the exciting and confused scene, when afterward they were trying to interpret it. The landing of the boat, the sud-

*Mark 5:6-13.

den, screaming rush of the lunatic, the steady figure of Jesus standing there before him, the continued horrible crying which frightened a drove of hogs feeding in the fields into a stampede—these are the outlines of the original picture, which show like a palimpsest through the disciples' account. That the swine ran over the cliff and were killed is a detail of the picture which has an insane appearance of fact. That this was due to a colloquy between the evil spirits and Jesus seems equally clearly to be not fact, but the coloring which came from the disciples' dramatic imagination—a thing which our matter-of-fact western mind will cease to find disturbing when it realizes that the instinct for the pictorial is as natural to the oriental as it is usually strange to us. A picture in words, like a picture on canvas, must be read with some understanding of the method of those who painted it; and when this picture is read that way, the difficulties which would be set a worried literalism vanish, and the real message which is important begins to appear. For the essential matter in this incident has to do not with imagined evil spirits but with the very actual Jesus; and in it Jesus does vividly appear. Through the clamor and confusion there grows a sense of his immense and dominating greatness. The poor, wild creature recognized it, shrank from it and yet bowed to it, felt its mighty mastery, and was healed. That is the first fact full of suggestion which comes out of the gospel story; and the second is this. When the report spread that

would come and lay his hands on her, she would be healed,—she would live. Jesus went with him, while the people crowded close about him on the road. In the press, a poor timid woman who had a wasting disease reached out her hand to touch him. The extraordinary sensitiveness of Jesus instantly distinguished that particular touch from the mass-contacts of the crowd. He turned about in the press.

"Who touched me?" he asked.

The disciples were astonished. "You see the multitude thronging you and you say, Who touched me?" they said. But his eyes still searched the crowd.

"Then the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace."*

Meanwhile they were drawing nearer to Jairus' house; and as Jesus was speaking to the woman, people from the house came to Jairus with a message.

"Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why do you trouble the Master any further?"

Jesus heard, but quietly he said to Jairus: "Be not afraid, only believe."

Then, as the gospel of Mark goes on to tell, he took with him Peter and James and John.

"And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James. And they

*Mark 5:33-34.

come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and he beholdeth a tumult, and many weeping and wailing greatly. And when he was entered in, he saith unto them, Why make ye a tumult, and weep? the child is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But he, having put them all forth, taketh the father of the child and her mother and them that were with him, and goeth in where the child was. And taking the child by the hand, he saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel rose up, and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway with a great amazement. And he charged them much that no man should know this: and he commanded that something should be given her to eat."*

Through both these contacts with human suffering there shines the strength of Jesus' compassion, and there shines also another striking fact. Both these healings were in response to an eager faith. The mercies of Jesus were not prodigies or impersonal signs. Neither did they depend upon his willingness alone. There was need that some great hunger of a human heart should create the expectancy which then the power in him could satisfy. When he went to Nazareth "he marvelled because of their unbelief," and "he could do there no mighty work."† But when faith was present, he was free.

*Mark 5:37-43. †Mark 6:5, 6.

Some time after the recovery of Jairus' daughter, Jesus went out again with the disciples into what he hoped would be the quiet places of the hills beyond the lake. But the multitude followed him; and when the boat in which they were rowing reached the other shore, the crowd was already there. Jesus was moved with pity toward them, "because they were as sheep having no shepherd, and he began to teach them many things." So far the narrative is simple, but then there follows an astonishing account:

"When the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent; send them away, that they may go into the country villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they all ate and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basket-

fuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men."*

Such is the graphic story as it occurs in Mark, and in the gospels of Matthew and Luke it is told again; and numberless religious readers in our western lands have assumed simply that here is an inexplicable miracle not to be understood but to be accepted, as one of those "more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

But as a recent traveller in Palestine has newly made plain, the way of precise and literalistic statement is not the way of the eastern peoples. "They never have had scientific or philosophic minds; they always have been dramatists and poets. . . . The deeper difficuly in taking seriously a miracle-narrative involving the rupture of natural law lies, not alone in the physical setting of the land, but in the mental setting of the people. They think in terms of miracle yet. They see things that we see and when they narrate them afterward the events have become miraculous. One comes away sure that miracles are relative, that the difficulty with many of these old narratives is not so much in the basic event around which they started as in the immense difference between the Oriental and the modern Occidental mind."†

Furthermore, as concerns the story of the feeding of the five thousand, it is an arresting fact that such a pic-

*Mark 6:35-44.
†*A pilgrimage to Palestine*, by H. E. Fosdick, 1927, pp. 138-139.

ture of Jesus as might seem to be presented there runs counter to some of the surest things known about him. He had already found that crowd-excitement produced an atmosphere in which people would not or could not hear the spiritual message which he cared most about. He had repeatedly avoided incidents which might lead to this excitement. Is it likely that he would have wanted it cried through all the country by five thousand throats that he could miraculously give people food?

What also of the first temptation in the Wilderness? Did not Jesus reject then the very idea which a literal interpretation of the story of the miracle would show him to have acted upon—namely, that a power which came from God could take short-cuts to answer men's needs? What else would this have been except to say "yes" instead of "no" to the voice that suggested, "Command this stone that it become bread"?

When all is said and done, there will always be an element of the unexplained about this account of the feeding of the multitude. It is well to recognize, and plainly to say, that exactly what happened, and how it happened, we do not know. Nobody was there who cross-examined witnesses or took precise testimony: and nobody can do it now. But over and above the question of how the feeding was accomplished, there shines the dominant fact of Jesus' solicitude for the people who needed to be fed. He "was moved with compassion toward them"; and this compassion was

not idle. He first took all the food the disciples had—five loaves and two fishes—and blessed that, and used it; and then his contagious confidence drew forth from somewhere enough food more to satisfy the hunger of the whole obedient group. Some details such as "the twelve baskets full of fragments" may well be part of the inevitable growth of the story as it passed from mouth to mouth; but the central thing, which left so deep an impression that it has passed into three of the gospels, was the grateful experience of this crowd of people who had followed Jesus even into his attempted solitude, and went away awed and wondering because somehow when they were with him their needs were satisfied.

The story of the feeding moves on into another picture round which there drifts the mist of wondering memory. Rowing back across the lake in the darkness when the day was done, buffeted by contrary winds so that they could not well have known whether they were in the midst of the lake or driven in near the strand, the disciples suddenly looked up—and there was Jesus. Their immense relief at seeing him again made his coming like a miracle, and this is the way the telling of it came down to Mark:

"And straightway he constrained his disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before him unto the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself sendeth the multitude away. And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. And when

even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them: but they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were troubled. But he straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves; for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened."*

Two other flashing glimpses of Jesus belong to about this time. So vividly did the remembrance of them linger that the account in Mark's gospel still recalls Jesus' gestures and the accents of his speech. One was the healing, in the region of Decapolis, of a deaf man who had also an impediment in his speech. After Jesus had put his fingers into his ears and touched his tongue, "looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh even the deaf to

*Mark 6:45-52.

hear, and the dumb to speak."* The other glimpse of him is at Bethsaida. The people there brought a blind man to him. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, and when he had put his hands on his eyes, he asked him if he saw anything. "And he looked up, and said, I see men, for I behold them as trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked steadfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him away to his home saying, Do not even enter into the village."†

This healing of the blind man in Bethsaida is a fragmentary hint of what may have been a much longer stay of Jesus in that country to the east of the lake of Galilee than there is any account of in the gospels. For there is a record that Jesus once linked Bethsaida, and Chorazin, which was near it, with Capernaum itself, as among the cities "wherein most of his mighty works were done."‡ "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!" he said, "woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you."§ The fact that so little of what these words suggest is told with any detail in the gospels is a reminder that even the utmost of the material which has

*Mark 7:34-37.
†Mark 8:23-26.
‡Matt. 11:20.
§Matt. 11:21-22.

come down in writing is like a broken mosaic, which gives indeed the central picture of what Jesus was, but leaves great spaces of the background empty.

In that background were other "mighty works." What did Jesus mean by that phrase? It is easy to misread it; that, and other phrases similar to it, have indeed often been misread with results disastrous to the understanding of Jesus. "Mighty works" have been taken to mean prodigies. Jesus has been pictured, in what has believed itself to be the orthodox imagination, as doing such astounding deeds of power that the dullest observer might conclude that here must be God come down to earth. But to suppose this is not only to obscure his humanness: it is also to misinterpret God. The "mighty works" which Jesus did, and which he spoke of, were no prodigies. Whenever they were mighty,—and in unbelieving Nazareth they could not be—he thought of them as that mighty naturalness with which the spirit of God must operate through lives which were open to receive it. God's spirit might have outward effects beyond what men had dared believe before; but what he cared for was the effect within. That he should be thought of and followed after as a "worker of miracles" which men should gape at in wonder, and because they found these inexplicable, suppose that they had seen God, was to him intolerable. The God he loved and Whom he wanted men to understand was the God Who could never be seen in outward signs, nor ever received till men received his meaning in their souls. "An evil and adulterous gen-

eration seeketh after a sign," he said, "but there shall no sign be given unto it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."* And what was his sign that God was with Jonah? Not, for Jesus, any tale of miracle: but the fact that when Jonah preached, even the men of Nineveh *repented*. The sign of God is the cleansing of the heart so that the grace of God manifestly may come in.

The thronging of the people wherever he appeared, and the excited reports which began to spread concerning him, may have been one reason why Jesus went now for a time into a different territory altogether. He journeyed toward the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and as Mark's gospel says, "he entered into an house, and would have no man know of it; but he could not be hid."†

It was a distressed woman of Syro-Phœnicia who found him out. Great need always seemed able to find a way to reach him.

She had a daughter who in the usual language of the time was said to have an unclean spirit. It was another case apparently of those pathetic mental and nervous derangements of which Palestine in those days seemed to be full. The mother besought Jesus to come and heal her child.

What follows, as is so often the case with the swift narrative of the gospels, is greatly condensed. The skeleton of the conversation is there, but not the subtleties of its expression. We do not hear what the woman first said, and we do not see the look on Jesus'

*Matt. 12:39, A. V. †Mark 7:24.

face which to the woman was the first and most assuring answer.

He said, "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs?"

What words were those? A hard rebuff; or a very gently playful testing of this woman's spirit? Her answer shows the way she divined his real response.

"Yes, Lord," she said, "yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

"And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter. And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the demon gone out."*

But what did Jesus mean in the first place by saying that "the children" must "first be filled"? It was not an accidental phrase. It touches something deep in his thought and purpose. He was thinking of Israel. His mission was first to his own people. Why? *Not* because individuals there were more precious in God's sight, and in his own sight, than individuals elsewhere; and not that he would ever refuse to any child of God the help that he could give. But rather it was because he held to the vision that the nation of Israel—this nation which seemed so long to have been chosen and prepared for a great spiritual destiny,—might as a whole be brought to realize it. He must for the most part concentrate on a ministry which might make that

*Mark 7:27-30.

come to pass. The dawn of the Kingdom of God on earth required more than single souls redeemed. It required a people reborn in its corporate consciousness, so that there might be established those new relationships in which men and women should fully express the meanings of God. The dull leaders of Israel could not see this vision; the crowd snatching at appearances, only now and then had caught glimpses of it; but Jesus saw it always. It was the high transfigurement of his patriotism. He would wake a people for the first time in the world's history to seek their glory and their greatness not by trying to change their world, but by letting God change themselves, and seeing then the world change with them. He saw that the great dream of Isaiah might be builded into fact. Let a people rise which should really show the beauty and the peace that religion could bring to life, and it should be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills. Nations should flow unto it, and say one to another, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and he will teach of his ways and we will walk in his paths."*

But it was being brought home to Jesus that his vision might go unfulfilled. The day was coming when he should cry to the souls of his people, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . and ye would not!"†

*Isaiah 2:3. †Matt. 23:37.

CHAPTER IX

JESUS DARES THE FINAL TEST

About the time of the journey toward Tyre and Sidon, or a little before it, Jesus had sent the disciples out two by two to carry the message which they were beginning to learn from him. They had been with him long enough now to be different themselves. They were experiencing the thrilling fact that some of that amazing fulness of living which they had seen in him could come into them, too. He told them that they could cast out evil spirits, help sick people get well, and proclaim the Kingdom of God as they had seen him do. It was their first lesson in responsibility, and their first taste of power. They came back exultant. They had made people listen. They had felt the intoxication of success. All sorts of new and wonderful things might happen. Why not the most wonderful thing of all? Why not the coming of the Kingdom, and they themselves the great ones in it? It was true that Jesus had been talking of the Kingdom in a strange, inward fashion which they did not quite understand. But Simon the Zealot was still full of those passionate desires which Judas of Galilee and others of the heroes had died for. And it was the same in Judæa.

The people were bitter-hearted under the Roman yoke. There were great caged forces for freedom waiting to be let loose. What if Jesus should use that power of his? What if he should actually be— ? *could* he really be—? they kept wondering, and did not dare yet to say exactly what it was that they were beginning to think that he might prove.

And now on this journey toward the north and west, it may be that they had seen the rich cities of the coast, with their great buildings, their abounding commerce, the ships loading and unloading cargoes, and Roman triremes in the harbor. They came back on the road that led to Cæsarea Philippi, the new city which Herod had builded, magnificent with its marble theatre and its palaces. Plainly the world had gorgeous possibilities for those who knew how to seize them.

Then suddenly Jesus startled them with a question which seemed to follow exactly down their hidden train of thought. "Who do men say that I am?" he said.

They told him what the crowd said.

"Master, men say that you are a great prophet."

"Yes, some say you are Elijah come again."

"And some say that you are John the Baptist risen from the dead."

There was a moment of silence. Then he said: "But who do *you* say that I am?"*

Who did they say that he was? That was the very

*Mark 8:27-29.

question they had been half-afraid to ask themselves. They were abashed, and uncertain what to answer. All but Peter. His impetuous voice split the silence as startlingly as a flash of lightning, in which every man saw the face of his secret thought revealed. "Who do we say that you are? Well, this is what we say: You are the Christ!"

The great admission was out now. They had been coming toward this conclusion for a long time. They had sensed it dimly through strange, veiled things which Jesus had said. They had felt through their growing sense of his greatness that he must be the Greatest, whom the hopes of the years had called by the mighty name, Messiah!

What would he say now? Would he confess himself beyond any doubt the Anointed One? Would he begin to organize his Kingdom?

To their consternation, he did utterly the reverse. He said that they must not tell the people what they had just said. The people could not understand. And then he went on to say what *they* could not understand. He spoke about going up to Jerusalem. That was not strange, for into the Holy City it was natural that Messiah should go. But up to Jerusalem for what? To die! He said that he would be rejected there by the elders and the chief priests, and that he would be killed. Jesus killed!

They did not believe it. How could they believe it? Jesus must be speaking one of those parables by which

they were so often baffled at first. Some other day he would clear up their confusion.

It was Peter who had burst into the sudden confession of Jesus as Messiah. It was Peter who voiced the protest now which all the disciples felt against Jesus' staggering hint of what messiahship might lead to. "Be it far from thee, Lord!" he said. "This shall never be unto thee!" The thought of Jesus leaped back across the days to that day in the wilderness when the Tempter came. " 'He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee.' You, the Appointed One of God, *you* suffer?"—whispered again the old beguilement, speaking now through Peter's voice. Like lightning came his answer, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" And then to Peter,—poor, loving, bewildered Peter,—he went on: "Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men."*

Nevertheless they went on believing not only that he must be Messiah, but that because he was the Messiah, he would presently establish the Kingdom they had hoped for. Once more they came into Capernaum. He said to them: "What was it that you disputed among yourselves by the way?" They kept an embarrassed silence. For what they had disputed about was the question as to which of them should be the greatest in the Kingdom that was to come. Another day James and John came to him, saying, "Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of

*Matt. 16:22-23.

thee." He said, "What would ye that I should do for you?" "Grant unto us," they answered, "that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." When the other disciples heard of it, they were indignant. But their indignation was not against the idea that such a request should be made, but rather at the fact that James and John had got ahead of them, and made it first.*

But gradually, even upon the reluctant minds of the disciples, it began to dawn that their conceptions had to be profoundly changed. In Capernaum, that day when they had been disputing as to who should be the greatest, he took a little child and set him in the midst of these shame-faced men—ashamed because he had caught them in their quarrelling. "Look at this child," he said. (The child drew close to Jesus' side, as children instinctively did; since it is love that reaches them and only love that they understand.) "If you have the spirit which can win this child, you have understood me; and if you have understood me, you have understood God."

Then he looked into their faces and he said: "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."†

And when James and John came to him with their desire for the posts of honor, he said that posts of honor were not his to give. These belonged in the hand of God. It was something else that he could give—

*Mark 10:35-41. †Mark 9:35, A. V.

something more superbly perilous. "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of," he said, "and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said they could, though they did not really know what it was he meant. He must have smiled at them with pity for all the hard truth they had to learn and for their slowness to learn it, and with a great love too for these men who so blunderingly loved him. "You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized," he said. Then he called the ten others of the twelve. "You know," he began, "that among the Gentiles those who are put in places of rulership lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. So shall it not be among you. But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

"The Son of Man." There was the name he had used before as he faced the Scribes in the synagogue at Capernaum, carrying its mystic hint of the glory which the prophet Daniel dreamed, yet carrying too its note of identification with the life of man to which he belonged and whose destiny he shared.

Steadily now he began to press home upon the disciples the fact that following him would be a costly

*Mark 10:38-45, A. V.

thing. Love must pay a great price for faithfulness. "If any man would come after me," he said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?"*

In the alternatives which he had foreseen and between which he had chosen, he had answered that question for himself in the wilderness. He was answering it now with a closer realization. More and more the great conception of a suffering messiahship took hold upon his thought. It brooded over him with dark wings, full of shadow and of mystery; then, with those same wings, it lifted him, as an eagle lifts, above the crags, above the clouds, into the awful freedom of the sun-bathed upper air. From the height of his vision now he saw anew the wide meaning of his ministry. It might be that he could not redeem Israel. It might be that the span of his own life would seem to show little done. But the world was his, and time was his. Love alone could be redeeming. And love might need to show itself upon a cross.

He went up into a mountain with the three disciples who were closest to him—Peter and James and John. Often he did that; for the lift of the heights, and the quiet, and the vast reaches of the wind-swept sky always were for him the altar-stairs to God. But this

*Mark 8:34-36.

time there was something new and ineffable in his communion. Night came, stars glimmered, and clouds drifted in the sky. The disciples had lain down heavy with sleep; but Jesus was praying. Then suddenly they woke, or Peter woke, and his cry woke the others. He said he saw Moses and Elijah standing there on the mountain top; and in his fright he began to call to Jesus about building tabernacles for them—for he wist not what he said. No word came back from Jesus: but the disciples looked and they never forgot what they beheld. There was a light upon his face that made it seem transfigured. It shone there in the darkness as when the moon is risen, and the cloak about him seemed to glisten like white flame. Then a cloud drifted over the peak of the mountain. For a moment they seemed left alone, and they said that it was as though the voice of God himself spoke to them out of the dimness: "This is my beloved Son."* The mist blew by, and there again was Jesus—Jesus, with something tremendous in his eyes.

They were not to tell then to any man all that he said to them in the long walk down from the mountain to the valley again, but later they did tell what the talk was about. He spoke to them about the future, about his going up to Jerusalem, about his death there that yet would not be death. It was of this that he had been thinking and praying on the mountain; it was out of this that the transfigurement of his spirit and

*Mark 9:2-8.

of his face had come. They still did not understand very well. When he spoke of death and of a resurrection they were confused. They could not yet fit their thoughts to these dark premonitions of suffering and disaster. They wondered about the signs of Messiah's Kingdom. Was it not part of prophecy that Elijah must first come back to earth? Yes, said Jesus. Elijah had already come in John the Baptist. The herald of the Kingdom had appeared and men had slain him. John had gone his way to death, and a greater than John must also go.

The body's breathing must readjust itself when it comes down from the heights; so must the breathing of the spirit, too. Men do not always find that spiritual readjustment easy. After great moments of exaltation, the atmosphere of life's common levels seems to smother. The sight of the old commonplaces, and the clamor of the old needs, are an irritation to the soul. But back to the old levels Jesus had to come; it was of the very nature of what he knew to be his ministry that he must so come and bring the power of the mountain with him. Scarcely had he descended from the mountain paths when he saw a crowd before him. There were the disciples he had left behind, gathered about some object of excitement toward which the people from all quarters were pushing in. When those on the edges of the crowd saw Jesus, they began to run toward him, and after them a man who broke his way through. "Master," he cried when he came near, "I

brought my son to you. He has a dumb spirit which takes him and tears him, so that he foams and gnashes his teeth. When you were not here, I asked your disciples to heal him, and they could not."

For a moment Jesus sighed. These poor, blundering men of his, this pitiful, excitement-seeking crowd! "O faithless generation," he said, "how long shall I be with you, how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto me."

They brought him near, and he grovelled on the ground. The father stood there, looking at the boy, looking at Jesus.

"How long ago did this come upon him?" Jesus asked. "When he was a child," the father said. "It throws him into the fire, and into the water. But if thou canst do anything, have mercy on us and help us!" "If thou canst!" repeated Jesus. "If *you*. If *you* can believe. All things are possible to him who believes." The man turned to Jesus. "Lord, I believe," he cried. "I have some belief. Help me in my unbelief!"

Jesus turned upon the boy those eyes of his in which so many before had felt the deep, arresting power. He spoke to him as he had spoken on another day to the possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum—as though the agony and fear which held him were a foul thing which had no place in his true self. "Come out of him," he said, "and enter into him no more." The boy gave a great shriek and fell as though he were

dead. The crowd stared at him, and whispered: "He is dead." But Jesus took his hand and lifted him up; and stilled and changed, the boy arose.*

When the crowd had scattered, and Jesus was alone with the disciples, they asked him: "How is it that we could not cast it out?" Why not, indeed? Was the power to communicate the grace of God to be won by less effort than men would give to master some every-day, material proficiency,—less than they would give to learn how to catch fish, or to grow grain, or to drive camels? Was it a thing to come at the call of any casual idea that it might be convenient? Jesus' thought went back to his own nights and days in the solitudes, and to the wrestlings of his soul with God. But all he said was: "This kind can come out by nothing but by prayer and fasting."†

And now the time had come to leave Galilee. He knew that he must go up to Jerusalem. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," he said, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"‡ He had given his message in the province. He must carry it now to the centre of the nation's life. There in that city set upon an hill he must kindle the light of a witness that all the world might see.

He "departed thence and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it."§ He must be alone for a little while,—alone with the future and with the past. He would not come back to Galilee

*Mark 9:14-26. †Mark 9:29. ‡Luke 12:50. §Mark 9:30, A. V.

any more; and in Galilee were all the lingering associations of the years. There was the little town embosomed in the hills, so full of boyish memories; despite that Sabbath in the synagogue, sweet still to his thought with friendly sights and sounds; pulling at his heart with ties of home. There in Galilee were the ways along which he had walked a hundred times, the old paths over the hills and through the vineyards. There were the towns where lived the men he loved. There was the lake shimmering in the golden sunrise or touched with quiet magic by the pathway of the moon. He could remember so many things in Galilee —so many faces. There were little children he had stopped in the market-place to play with—children he had taken in his arms and blessed when their mothers brought them to him. There were the sick whom he had healed and the light of whose grateful eyes still shone through his thought. There were all the poor, wistful folk to whom he had brought the good tidings of the love of God, sinners whom he had reclaimed, discouraged men and women whom he had strengthened, men without a purpose in whom he had lit the heavenly flame. Even in Galilee, it was true, he had his enemies; but for the most part, he knew the people loved him there. The common people heard him gladly, and in comparison with them the hostile great ones did not count. The whole thought of Galilee was like a warm embrace to draw him close. It would stand back of him, and enfold him like the hills.

But he might not stay in Galilee. Nothing drove him forth, yet he must go. The eagle in him stretched its wings and sought the sky. From those who would have protected him, he must fare forth to the perilous chances of his mightier world. He must meet the challenge of the hard reality which drew the utmost in him to expression; and though that challenge pierced him through like swords, he found the combat good.

On his way toward Jerusalem the disciples came to him with a protest against something they had just encountered. They told him they had seen a man who was casting out devils, and this man did not belong to Jesus' fellowship. What right did he have to be healing people? "We forbade him," they said, "because he followed not us." They supposed Jesus would be pleased, because they had been jealous for his prerogatives. But once again they had fallen short of understanding him. "Forbid him not," he said. "He that is not against us is for us."* His fellowship was something wider than a name. In the great division which mattered in the forces of his world, the division between love and hate, every life whose touch was loving was on his side.

Then he went on to amplify for the disciples the lesson which might dawn through their mistake. One thing more than all else they needed to learn,—that if they would follow him, and through him find God, they must let love take possession of them, body, mind,

*Mark 9:38-40.

and soul. Even the little things which love inspired might become divine; and that within them which doubted love and denied it—their ambition, their pride, their false and jealous judgments—must be cut out of them, no matter what it cost. With the utmost power of his imagery he painted the thrilling yet perilous truth which he would have them understand:

"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell. . . . For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another."*

Even so, the salt that was in them still could be for-

*Mark 9:41-50.

gotten. On the way southward, he sent messengers to a village of Samaria where he had hoped to lodge. But the people in it were hostile. Between Samaritans and Jews there was an ancient hatred; and as soon as the Samaritan villagers saw who these would-be visitors were, they shut their doors against them. The disciples James and John were furious. God ought to destroy such creatures as these off the face of the earth. It used to be so in the old days. Was it not written somewhere in the sacred scriptures that the prophet Elijah called down lightning to burn up men who had insulted him? "Can we do it, Lord?" they exclaimed, when they had come back to Jesus. "Can we call down fire to consume these Samaritans?"

It needed a spirit as great as Jesus' was to show no impatience in his disappointment. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," he said. "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Then, says the narrative in the gospel, "they went to another village."* That was all. No anger; no stooping of his spirit to resentment: only a pity for the village which had punished itself. For those he might have helped, there would not be help. The blessing he might have left there would go unclaimed.

Was he thinking of that Samaritan village when he told two of the parables which the gospel of Luke has preserved,—thinking of those inexorable issues of a whole life's gain or loss which may turn on one cru-

*Luke 9:51-56.

cial moment when the soul is called upon to recognize its chance from God? This is what he said to the disciples:

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, and the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not have left his house to be broken through. Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh."*

And Peter said, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink, and

*Luke 12:35-40.

to be drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful. And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men commit much, of him will they ask the more."*

And he said one day to the people: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say, A shower comes; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be heat; and it comes to pass."† They could read the signs of the weather; why could they not read the signs of the times? And to a group of Pharisees on another day, who came demanding to be told when the kingdom of God would come, he answered: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or, lo there! For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."‡

It may have been that the memory of the disciples' anger over the Samaritan village was still in his mind and colored what he said in another parable which he told. There came a certain lawyer, trying to test him

*Luke 12:41-48. †Luke 12:54. ‡Luke 17:20-21.

with a smooth question in which he thought that even Jesus might get beyond his depth.

"What shall I do," he said, "that I may inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the law?" Jesus answered. "What do you read there?"

"That thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

Jesus said: "You have answered right. Do this, and you shall live."

"But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine, and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care

of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee."

Jesus looked at the lawyer, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

He said, "He that showed mercy on him."

Then said Jesus, "Go, and do thou likewise."*

To the lawyer, with his lawyer's notion of things going according to precedent and governed by their proper code, this story had a stinging unexpectedness. The representatives of religion, the priest and the Levite passing by, and the hated Samaritan the bringer of mercy! He and others did not like to admit it, but Jesus had made it plain that it is not the group a man belongs to but the spirit in his heart that counts. And another truth Jesus had put into that parable, when he turned the lawyer's question round and made him see and answer his own inquiry from a wholly new approach. "Who is my neighbor?" said the lawyer. In that question he expressed the instinctive demand of many another man before and since. Show me the limits of my obligation. Show me exactly who *are* my neighbors to whom I have a duty, so that I may know by implication the rest of the world as *not* my neighbors, and may go my way untroubled. But the parable which Jesus told made that smooth alternative impossible. He pictured one man in need, and passed in review before this man the different types whom

*Luke 10:25-37.

the need should judge. Neighborliness, he said, is not an obligation; it is an opportunity. And the final question of life, as the final question in the parable, is not who is your neighbor, but whom can you be neighbor *to?*

Meanwhile, the road went backward beneath the disciples' feet. Galilee lay farther and farther behind. Jerusalem was coming nearer. Often they were wistfully uneasy. Peter tried to extract something which would fortify their spirits. "Master," he said, "we have left all and followed thee." Jesus understood. They still craved their assurances and their rewards, but they were coming toward the point when heroically they could seize the kind of rewards which now they shrank from. There is a glint of playfulness as well as a high solemnity of promise in his answer,—

"I tell you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."*

*Mark 10:29-31.

CHAPTER X

ON THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Even the lengthiest records preserved in the gospels are relatively short. Of all that Jesus said and did they have transmitted only broken glimpses. So, of the journey to Jerusalem, there is much more that one could wish we knew. Where did Jesus go when the evenings came? What villages did he enter? Of what did he and the disciples talk as they builded their fire at nightfall under the watching stars? These and other wonderings about that journey go unanswered, or can be answered only by surmise.

But this at least can be inferred as sure. On that road to Jerusalem, and in the towns through which he passed, Jesus was meeting people; and from among those people, three groups were emerging in relationships to him which become increasingly defined. Those relationships are revealed in conversations preserved in the gospels, some of which appear to be dated as during the journey, and some of which seem to have occurred after Jesus reached Jerusalem. But it is convenient to listen to them continuously, since all of them belong consistently together as indications of Jesus' mind toward these various groups around him, and of their attitude toward him.

One group was that same one which so often had crossed his path, the Pharisees and Scribes and other self-important folk. The more he saw of them, the more he knew that there were some in Israel who would reject the best he had to bring. The organization-mind was against him. The Kingdom of God would not be built out of those who had imagined themselves to be its heirs. Some one asked him, "Lord, are there few that are saved?" and he answered:

"Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last."*

One day at a feast,—it may have been in Simon the

*Luke 13:23-30.

Pharisee's house—he stood and watched the guests come in. He marked how the Scribes pushed their way with an instinctive arrogance toward the places of honor. Then he called his disciples round him. If he had asked them what they were thinking that moment in their secret hearts, it may well be that they would have acknowledged they were envying these men whose importance could feel so sure of its deserts. But once again he showed them that reversal of values which little by little they were to learn from him. Sit not down in the highest room, he said: go sit in the lowest place. It is better to deserve to be called up higher than to go high and to be sent down. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

It was with reference to the same leaders of the people, who had been recreant to their opportunity, that he spoke two of the sternest of his parables:

"What think ye? A certain man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness,

*Luke 14:11.

and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent afterward, that ye might believe him."*

And he said—"Hear another parable:

"A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some, and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

"Have ye not read even this scripture:

'The stone which the builders rejected,
'The same was made the head of the corner;
'This was from the Lord,
'And it is marvellous in our eyes'?

*Matt. 21:28-32.

"And they sought to lay hold on him; and they feared the multitude; for they perceived that he spake the parable against them: and they left him, and went away."*

Twice the Pharisees tried to trap him with questions adroitly planned. One day, when the crowd was around to watch, they came in company with some of the Herodians. Unctuously they began; "Master, we know that you are true, and are not concerned with what any man thinks." (They did not say it in words, but the smooth intonation of their voices said plainly enough, Here are the Herodians too, and they will tell what you say to Herod; but then you are so courageous that, of course, Herod means nothing to you!) "You do not regard the person of men. No, you teach the way of God in truth. Tell us then, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

They paused, with the glint of an evil expectancy in their eyes. Surely they had him now! If he should say that God forbade the giving of tribute, there would be quick action by the Roman governor, or by Herod as a tool of Rome, against him as a teacher of sedition. If he should be afraid to say that, and should encourage submission to the tribute, the people would be angered and would turn against him. One thing or the other he had to say. The jaws of the trap were set.

*Mark 12:1-12.

He knew the men he was dealing with. With a spirit such as theirs, what did it matter who their ruler was, Cæsar or another? It was something deeper than a question of taxation which they needed to determine.

He saw the shrewd snare they so carefully had spread, and serenely he walked out of it. "Bring me a denarius," he said, "that I may see it." Some one handed him a coin.

"Whose image and superscription is this?"

Grudgingly they answered, "Cæsar's."

He gave the coin back. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," he said, "and to God the things that are God's."*

The Pharisees had failed. The Sadducees, to whose ranks belonged the higher orders of the priests, would try their hand. They were the opportunists, polite sceptics who filled the chief offices of the church by the favor of Rome. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. So they asked him a long hypothetical question about what would happen at the resurrection of a woman who had been married successively to seven brothers. The question was tangled with intricate associations of the Jewish law—a part of the law based on the assumption that this life is all, that a man who dies is utterly dead unless he lives on in his children, and that therefore it is the duty of a dead man's brother to marry his wife and have children who may bear the brother's name. Once again he lifted

*Mark 12:14-17.

a pettifogging question to the plane of a lofty truth where the little stratagems of the men who had asked it simply had no place. He said that in the sight of Him who is God not of the dead but of the living these cold-blooded arrangements which they called marriage did not exist. If that were marriage, then in the life to come they should neither marry nor be given in marriage. Those who entered there must be "as the angels in heaven."* There, comradship must be not of the body but of soul to kindred soul.

Even through the hard resistance of the group who opposed him, the winsomeness of Jesus here and there made its way. There were individual Scribes and Pharisees who saw what their general class prejudice made it almost impossible for most of them to see. One such had heard Jesus' answers to the men who brought him their calculated questions, and he had been impressed with the mastery of Jesus in those replies. Sincerely he came to him and asked, "What commandment is the first of all?"

"Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other

*Matt. 22:30.

but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question."*

If this one Scribe showed that the individuals among the Pharisaic party were not all alike, so also it was true that not all the people were like this group. There were many who stood in awe of the Pharisees but did not love them. They did love Jesus, and he knew it.

Mostly these who loved him were among the poor. There was a reason for that. They were close to simple facts. They could not be complacent. Their human emotions were not crusted over with the protective covering of things. They could respond instinctively to Jesus without elaborate inhibitions first. He admired them for their patient hardships. He loved them for their quiet daily heroisms. He yearned over them with a passion of pity and with a passion of assurance, too. It is not hard to understand why, in addition to the beatitude which Matthew gives, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Luke had heard of another one: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled."†

Nothing roused in him a more awful indignation than the sight of men who were callous to suffering,

*Mark 12:28-34. †Luke 6:20-21.

like Dives in the parable of Lazarus, or of men who exploited the weak, especially when they cloaked their evil under the forms of religious respectability; and nothing made his heart leap up more quickly than that uncalculating generosity of which the poor are capable. He wanted the promise of the Kingdom of God to be beautiful to all the patient, heavy-laden people. So he pictured it as a great feast to which the most forlorn and unlikely should be bidden,—from the highways and the hedges, that God's house might be filled. And the same parable which is given in the gospel of Luke is given again by Matthew:

"How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."*

The third group of people with whom he was concerned, and the nearest, was the group of his own disciples. There is a sense in which his words to them seemed stern. They were. But it was the sternness of a great love which held them unswervingly to the challenge of their heroic chance. He would lead them to something higher than immediate happiness. He would let them share God's service to the uttermost, with him.

*Matt. 18:12-14.

"Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

"A man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."†

It was because he saw inescapably now what discipleship would demand that he did not encourage others to come after him. It was too late for those whose spirits had not already begun to be disciplined to the thought of danger. Those who went with him now must be men who at least had promise of heroic stuff. "As they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead: but go thou and pub-

*Luke 12:51-53. †Matt. 10:36-39.

lish abroad the kingdom of God. And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

And he told this parable:

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace. So therefore, whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."†

They had journeyed now through the country to the east of the Jordan, and back by the fords of the river to the west. They came to Jericho. It was in Jericho that Jesus saw Zacchæus. Outside of Jericho he met another man who had need of him in a different way.

By the road-side sat a blind man, begging. His name was Bartimæus. For many a day he had sat there

*Luke 9:57-62. †Luke 14:28-33.

stretching out his hand into the darkness. This day his ears caught an unaccustomed sound. He was used to the footsteps of passers-by; but now there came no footsteps of scattered individuals, but the heavy trampling of a multitude, a tidal wave of human feet flooding down his road. His sightless eyes strained for an understanding. His hands reached out to lay hold of some person in the throng. His eager questioning was flung out to beseech the answer of any one who would stop and speak. Men called back, "Jesus of Nazareth passes by!"

Jesus of Nazareth! Even the blind man had heard of him,—the prophet from Galilee, the prophet who had strange powers from God: the prophet who healed. He cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The crowd was impatient. They tried to push him back and silence him. "Hold your peace!" they said. But he cried so much the more, "Jesus, have mercy on me!"

Jesus heard. The sound and pressure of a crowd seemed never to be too great for him to distinguish the individual voice of a passionate desire. He told those who were near him to go and bring this man.

The messengers went to Bartimæus. "Stop calling," they said. "Be of good cheer. He is calling you." The blind man flung his cloak aside, and groped toward Jesus, till the two stood face to face.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" said

Jesus. Bartimæus' whole soul trembled in his words; "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" Jesus answered, "Receive thy sight. Thy faith hath made thee whole." Then in the blind man's diseased eyes something happened. Life throbbed back to functions which had been dead. He looked up, he saw, and he followed after Jesus.*

The road from Jericho was the last stage of the approach to Jerusalem. Up from the deep valley of the Jordan it climbed, until presently it should scale the heights from which the Holy City would come suddenly into view. It was drawing near now to the time of the passover, and the road was crowded with people from all parts of the nation, going to the feast. There was excited talk of Jesus. Was it true that he might declare himself to be Messiah? What was going to happen in Jerusalem?

Then Jesus did a startling thing. He had come now nearly to the top of the Mount of Olives, to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. Some time—perhaps on one of those earlier visits to Jerusalem which the fourth gospel suggests—he had been here before. He knew people in those villages. Calling two of his disciples, he told them: "Go into that village ahead of you, and near the entrance of it you will find a colt tied. Take him and bring him to me. If any one asks you why you do it, tell him I have need of him."* The disciples went according to Jesus' bidding, found

*Luke 18:35-43. *Luke 19:30-31.

the colt, and brought him back. Then they put their cloaks upon him, and seated Jesus there. Not secretly he would enter Jerusalem,—not ambiguously, either. The time had come when his nation must receive him or reject him not as one teacher among many, but as the bringer of salvation which he knew himself to be. Thus it had been prophesied that the King-Messiah should enter into Jerusalem. Thus therefore he would enter, as he came with the message which alone could fulfil all that had been dreamed of in Messiah's name.

The people caught the implications of his act. They read it crudely, without understanding the deep spiritual reality which Jesus symbolized; but they sensed at least its huge importance. It was the day of destiny for Israel. Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed himself the Promised One! They thronged about him exultantly. They tore down branches from the trees and strewed them on his road. "Hosanah!" they cried. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our father David!"*

The sound of their shouting floated across the valley from the Mount of Olives and echoed in the streets of Jerusalem. Priests and Pharisees who heard it scowled. Who was this man of Galilee who dared come thus?

*Mark 11:9-10.

CHAPTER XI

THE ENTRANCE INTO THE CITY

Seen in the long perspective of the years, that entrance into Jerusalem may have various aspects, according to the understanding of those who think they see.

It may appear as a final grasp at power, desperate and magnificent. Seeing the deadly purpose of his enemies, Jesus would rouse the enthusiasm of the crowd to his defense. He would enter into Jerusalem so formidably championed that the authorities there could not venture to set themselves against him.

It may appear as the delusion of a dreamer. A man of the provinces imagines himself to be great. He clothes himself with dramatic symbolism and rides into the capital, to come into collision there with the hard realities which were to shatter him and his dream.

Either of these ideas may be believed, and each has been.

But the truth is a profounder matter. No visionary rode into Jerusalem that day. A man who espouses empty visions does not prevail to make the thought of the world follow him in fascination for nineteen centuries. And no would-be conqueror grasping crudely

after this world's power was there. The conqueror of that kind does not set his face toward a cross.

The one who rode into Jerusalem was Jesus,—Jesus, the seer of the things of God.

What he knew, had come out of his own mystic inner experience. He had dwelt with God until the purpose of God shone through him as a flame shines through a lamp. In the white simplicity of his immediate knowledge, the broken ideas of his time fell into a new perspective. He transfigured them and transvalued them into something greater than his contemporaries could understand,—something so great that even yet it is not fully understood.

In Israel there were various kinds of expectation of the Messiah. It is the fashion with many commentators to assume that Jesus must certainly have fitted himself into the pattern of one or the other of these. It is not strange that they should think so, for the disciples thought so too. But Jesus wore the livery of no stereotyped ideas. The threads of old hopes and dreams which he took up, he wove anew into the seamless garment of his own creative thought.

The crowd thought that Messiah would come with a sword. With his own greater might of leadership he would break the yoke of their enslavement. In a little book entitled, *By An Unknown Disciple*, this contrast between the thought of the crowd and the thought of Jesus is pictured with a fine imagination.

"Judas said, 'Seeing the power you have over the

people, I have told them you will end the oppression.'

" 'By driving forth the oppressors?' asked Jesus.

" 'Yes,' cried Judas. 'By thrusting them into the sea. By breaking their Empire in pieces, and humbling them so that they whisper out of the dust.'

"When Judas finished, Jesus rose and from the height on which we stood, he looked over the plain below with all its signs of the works of men, its villages and its towns, its crops and woods. . . . He seemed to withdraw into himself as if to gather strength, and then he turned again to Judas, and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.

" 'Will that end oppression?' he asked, and waited for a reply."*

Still he waits for the world to ponder that question, and reply. There *is* no reply save the one he gave, and the one he inspired. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword."† "The world passeth away and the lust thereof,‡ . . . but whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.§ God is love."¶ As he went into Jerusalem he knew that. On Calvary he would give his life to prove it.

There were others who did not share the materialistic idea of Messiah as a leader like other human men-of-war. They had been crushed by the hopelessness of the actual prospect. Israel's enemies were too strong. But they turned to the hope of a supernatural ven-

*By *An Unknown Disciple*, 1919, p. 75.
†Matt. 26:52.
‡I John 2:17.
§I John 5:4, A. V.
¶I John 4:16.

geance. God would miraculously raise up the Deliverer, to come in the terror of a heavenly flame.

Sometimes the two hopes blended. There should be a period of war and confusion. Then should dawn the day of the Messiah.

All these hopes Jesus understood—understood them on the Mount of Olives as he had understood them before on the mountain of his temptations. He was familiar with the apocalypses in which these hopes had been cast into a mighty symbolism. He read also what was in men's hearts. The religious longing that was there he took up into his own message. He believed as passionately as it had ever been believed that the cause of God should triumph over evil. But because he knew God better than others had known Him, he saw the manner of this triumph in another light.

What then of the so-called "apocalyptic discourses" which are preserved in the three earliest gospels?

They seem to be made up of various sayings of Jesus, the relationship of which the evangelists did not clearly understand. Some of them had to do with the immediate political conditions of the time. Hatred against the Roman occupation was becoming more and more unbridled. The passion pent up within the nation was coming continually closer to the point when it might break out into wild rebellion. With clear prevision, Jesus saw the results which would surely follow from these forces already moving on their fatal road. If the people could not discern the signs of the times, he

could. The mood in Israel which could imagine no way of deliverance save to match violence with worse violence should end in catastrophe. There would be another war, another agony, another sacking of Jerusalem, as there had been before. "Seest thou these great buildings?" he said as he looked at the temple. "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down."*

"There shall arise false Christs and false prophets,"† he continued,—false, would-be deliverers who should give tongue to the people's passions, and persuade them to believe that by the world's instruments of blood the ends of God could be achieved. But "the Messiah of the popular imagination,"—as V. G. Simkhovitch has truly written in his *Toward the Understanding of Jesus*,‡—"the man on horseback, of the conquering hero type, could accomplish nothing because the only conquest required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven was an inner conquest. Even if material conflict should be crowned with victory, what would such victories of the flesh avail? How could the Messiah of the popular imagination lead the Jews to a rebirth of the spirit, and to the gates of the kingdom that is within us and that cometh not with observation? How could men possibly enter into the kingdom, supposing some external changes to take place, if they themselves remained unchanged?"

*Mark 13:2. †Mark 13:22.

‡*Toward the Understanding of Jesus*, Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, 1925, p. 74.

But as Jesus, with the company of his close disciples round him, rode in from the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem, he knew that the chances were heavy against the possibility that the mind of Jerusalem and of the nation could be changed. They were too deeply committed to their material hopes. The crowd on the road welcomed him that day because they thought that he was *their* kind of Messiah; when they found that he did not fulfil their expectations, the shouts of welcome would turn into another sound.

Nevertheless, foreseeing this likelihood of the falling away of the people, Jesus as he entered Jerusalem was not daunted. He had cast his cause upon something mightier than men; and this is the explanation of those sayings of his, recorded in the gospels as having been spoken just after his entrance into the city, which have to do with the ultimate result to which he dared look forward. The records in the gospels—as in the thirteenth chapter of Mark—read like the apocalypses with which the nation then was familiar—apocalypses of judgment, prophesying the day of the fulfilment of the power of God. It may be that Jesus used the forms with which men were familiar, as the only way of conveying to his disciples and to others his confirmation of their faith that the final triumph should belong to God. It is certain that he believed that he himself, and the spirit which he incarnated, should prevail. The disciples thought he meant that he would presently appear in miraculous and visible glory,

and inaugurate that obvious kingdom which they were always coveting. Once again, as so often before, they failed to grasp the longer spiritual meaning through the language which he used. For him, his own superb religious certainty flamed instinctively into pictures; and with his poet's soul, how could it have been otherwise? He saw himself invested with his Father's glory. Men might kill him, but unconquerably he would come again. "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."* "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."†

When should his vindication be? There is no sure way of telling what he thought. Listening to him, the disciples saw the time foreshortened, and believed that Jesus expected to appear in glory soon, and visibly. But he was dealing with an eternity of conviction which made time of no account. The great matter was to be ready. He was sure of God's fulfilment of His promises; what he wanted to be sure of was that men could perceive it when it came.

*Mark 13:24-27. †Mark 13:31.

"But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."*

*Mark 13:32-37.

CHAPTER XII

JESUS MAKES HIS CHALLENGE PLAIN

Of the five days which followed the entry into Jerusalem, more has been told in the gospels than of any other five days in Jesus' life, and though it is not possible always to fit the elements of the record together in exact chronology, the general outline is clear to follow.

After he had ridden into the city amid the acclamations of the crowd, and had gone to the temple, Jesus did not stay in Jerusalem. He went back for the night to the village of Bethany.

The next day he came again with the disciples to Jerusalem. On the way, there occurred something of which the gospel of Mark gives a curious and very vivid account. Jesus saw a fig-tree, and came to it looking for figs. But he found only leaves. "Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit from thee henceforward forever."* So, it may be, Peter told Mark, who put it in his gospel. Also he told him something more. The next morning they passed by the same way. "They saw the fig-tree withered away from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered

*Mark 11:13-14.

away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

It is a strange story, seemingly very unlike Jesus, and apparently also not consistent with itself. Why should Jesus blast the tree, and why should the blasting of a tree be the text for the preaching of forgiveness? The answer can come only from conjecture; but one reasonable conjecture is that the impetuous Peter put his own ideas into what he thought his Master said and did. This was the same Peter who thought, when the swine ran over the cliff and were killed, that Jesus had sent the devil into the swine. It was the same Peter who was very reluctant once about indefinite forgiveness, who asked Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?" and to whom Jesus answered, "I say not, Until seven times, but until seventy-times seven."† It was the Peter who could remember, and probably ap-

*Mark 11:20-25. †Matt. 18:21-22.

proved, James' and John's idea of calling down fire on the churlish Samaritan village. Jesus came to the fig-tree that first morning drawn by the promise of its leaves. But it was like Jerusalem to which he was going and over which in that hour his heart was wistful—leaves and no fruit. The fig-tree at that moment became a parable—as indeed at four other points in the Gospel records the fig-tree is treated as a parable.* Before that fig-tree fruited, and before Jerusalem could bring forth fruit, he would be coming that way no more. If he could not eat of it now, he could never eat of it hereafter. The fig-tree, like the nation, was already withering. But Peter, when he saw it again the next day, was sure that Jesus had made it wither. He thought that Jesus had destroyed the tree, just as he and the other disciples were always supposing that Jesus would destroy the unrepentant people. Here, as in other instances, there was a distortion in the understanding of the disciples, by which what Jesus said has been refracted and dimmed beyond our clear recovery.

But it is possible to understand why Peter was in a frame of mind which made him, particularly on that day, think of Jesus as very formidable. On that same day when he heard the thinking-aloud of Jesus as he came to the empty tree, he saw Jesus go into the temple and cleanse it of the traders who defiled it. He witnessed there an indignation so scorching that it was not altogether strange that his impulsive mind, on the

*Luke 13:6-9, Mark 13:28-30, Matt. 24:32-34, Luke 21:29-31.

next morning when he saw the fig-tree withered, imagined that Jesus had scorched *that.*

The temple was the most sacred spot on earth to all men and women in Israel whose religion was sensitive. It was clothed with immemorial traditions. It had been, in times of peace and in times of desperate oppression, the supreme symbol of their loyalty and their common faith. In the centre of the temple, at the heart of its encircling courts, stood the Holy of Holies, behind the curtains of which there stood no representation of Deity, but only an altar where lights burned before the unseen and ineffable God. Foremost among the peoples of the world, the great prophets and spiritual geniuses of Israel had conceived a religion lifted above material grossness, and yet keeping its contact with the realities of life. God was the Holy One, to be found only by those who sought Him in spirit and in truth. This high conception, which was the supreme fact in the nation's religious heritage, Jesus had intuitively understood. His sure perception had lifted it clear of all the lesser things with which it was encumbered and by which often it was obscured. Once to the Pharisees he had said, in Galilee, "Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice."* And now in Jerusalem he found this high reality of religion perverted by the very men who were supposed to represent it. The temple had been turned into a market, the house of God into a machinery of gain.

*Matt. 9:13.

Doves and animals were to be provided for offerings: so the priests arranged to have them caged and stabled on the spot. It was ordered that no Roman money or other heathen symbols should pass current in the temple: so money-changers had their booths there to sell the required shekels. The priests of the temple were back of the whole pushing and profitable business. They issued pious invitations to the people to pray, and cultivated meanwhile the excellent commercial possibilities which to them were the more interesting by-products of a well-developed religious system.

Into the temple Jesus had gone on the day of his coming to Jerusalem. To the temple now on the next day he returned. His spirit was on fire within him at the memory of what he witnessed—the noise and trampling of cattle, the haggling of money-changers, the whole confused and clamorous sordidness of bargain and exchange. His passion for the purity of God —for the purity of the worship which prophets had died for and which smug priests were defiling now—made him terrible with that selfless wrath which can leap like devastating lightning. He took a few small cords and knotted them together. He opened the doors of the stalls where the oxen and sheep were penned, and they poured out. Then he turned toward the tables of the money-changers. They scattered before him, and the money of the overturned tables went rolling after them along the temple floor. He stood alone in the midst of the suddenly emptied court, where the crowd of amazed and awe-struck people gazed at him from

the watching circle to which they had pushed back.*

That curious formalism by which Christian art has so long depicted a kind of over-borne, anæmic Jesus forgot that scene in the temple. The moral majesty of Jesus could be an appalling thing. The trivial cords in his hand were nothing; it was the look in his eyes, and the authority of his gesture, before which the traders and the money-changers shrank dismayed. Anger in a little man is like a flurry of wind, before which others may give way for a moment as waters give way, only to come flooding back in a more angry sea. The greater the man, the deeper and more silent is the movement of his emotion. With such a one as Jesus, his anger must have been of an awful quietness. Such anger does not sound in noisy violence: it falls like a cataclysmic shadow. Men watch it as they watch an eclipse, scarcely breathing, seized with a dreadful sense as though their earth were falling into night.

From this time forth, Jesus had a new group of enemies. The powerful party of the Pharisees long since had been embittered against him because of his unconventional attitude toward the law. In their eyes, he was a violator of traditions which all God-fearing men were bound to observe. They assailed him on what they vehemently believed to be religious grounds. But the group who controlled the priestly offices of the temple, and formed the majority of the ruling council, the Sanhedrin, belonged to the party of the Sadducees. They did not share the extreme Pharisaic posi-

*Mark 11:15-18.

tion toward the minute obligations of the law. They were of a more complacent and compromising temper. They had made terms with Rome, which the more devoted Pharisees scorned to do, and had received the appointments which were at Rome's bestowal. So long as Jesus appeared in their eyes as merely a new teacher of religion, they in the main were unconcerned about him. But now matters had suddenly taken another turn. He had appeared in Jerusalem with a following from Galilee, and he had actually dared to defy their authority in the temple. To their minds this was social radicalism and disorder. Unless it were checked decisively, it might lead, they thought, to a seditious outbreak. And the Romans had scant patience either with sedition or with supposed authorities who were not strong enough to prevent it. Unless they were to run the risk of losing their offices, they must bring Jesus to an effective reckoning. The charge on which he might be disposed of was a secondary matter. They were ready to ally themselves with the Pharisees in order to be sure of as many points of attack upon him as might be necessary. And they would not rest in the matter, because with Jesus at large in the midst of the crowded city, the whole situation suddenly seemed uneasy and unsafe.

It may have been on the evening of this same day that Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives gazing at Jerusalem. As the twilight deepened, the crude details of the foreground faded. Mean houses and tortuous streets and all the little rawnesses of men's existence melted

into the purple mystery of the shadows that lengthened from the west. The hush of evening lay upon the fields around him; if there was any sound at all, it was the sound of the tinkling bells of sheep. Under the magic of the gathering darkness, Jerusalem clothed itself with the mystic garments of its immemorial romance. It rose across the valley, high and still, and out of the dimness only one glory burned. The lights were shining in the temple, like jewels in the city's crown. So beautiful that temple seemed—beautiful in its symbol of the glory of the spirit which ought to have been there, and was not. Through a long, wistful silence Jesus watched. Then from the great depths of his compassion came his cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

When he came the next time to the temple, the outraged priests, now somewhat recovered from the shock of the day before, met him with an indignant challenge. "By what authority doest thou these things?" they demanded.

"Yes, who gave thee this authority to do these things?"

*Matt. 23:37-39. A. V.

He looked at them a moment appraisingly. How could these men whose minds never travelled beyond officialdom and its emoluments understand the sovereignty of the unfettered spirit? What could they know of the authority of the soul that was at one with God? He turned their attempted challenge of himself into another challenge which probed deep into their souls.

"I will also ask of you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men? Answer me."

The baptism of John! John who had no outward authorization, John whose certainty came out of his own soul, John before whom Pharisees and priests had flinched—was John's influence an accident, or did it come from God?

They whispered confusedly among themselves, irritatedly aware of their dilemma.

"If we shall say, From heaven, he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?

"But if we shall say, Of men, the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a great prophet."

They could think of no sufficient answer: and sullenly they said to Jesus, "We cannot tell."

"Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things,"* he said.

Another conversation he had which concerned them. Talking to the people who flocked round him in the

*Mark 11:28-33.

temple, he asked, "How say the scribes that the Christ is the Son of David?"

It was the old idea that Christ must come according to the tradition pattern. David had been a king; so, the scribes thought, must the Messiah be. But salvation was to come in another way than by a restoration of a kingship of David's kind.

For "David himself said, in the Holy Spirit, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David himself calleth him, Lord; how is he then his son?"

He said to the people also, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and to have salutations in the market-places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and the chief places at feasts: they that devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater condemnation."*

In the temple, as elsewhere, Jesus was no teacher of abstractions, rapt in ideas and oblivious to the vivid, present fact. His quick observation read the characters of the men who came and went before him. Out of what he had seen he framed one of the most unforgetable of his parables.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the

*Mark 12:35-40.

week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

At another time he was sitting opposite the treasury. "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than they all: for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had."†

Each night he went back to Bethany. There were two houses in Bethany with which his name is linked. Mark's gospel tells of one. "While he was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse of ointment of pure nard very costly; and she brake the cruse, and poured it over his head. But there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred shillings, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her. But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good

*Luke 18:10-14. †Luke 21:1-4.

work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."*

It is possible that this anointing is the same of which Luke tells as though it had appeared earlier in Jesus' ministry. But it may also be that, notwithstanding the similarity in names, this "Simon the leper" is not the same as Luke's "Simon the Pharisee," and that this is a different incident in a different place. It is full of beauty—albeit a strange, sad beauty. From the increasing bitterness of hatred which the authorities showed against him, Jesus saw that tragedy lay not far ahead. The devotion of this woman had now an eternal quality, for he himself was about to pass beyond the accidents of time into his eternal Kingdom of the spirit, which waited on the other side.

There was another house in Bethany, the memory of which has become immortal. Two sisters lived there. Was it one of them who came with the nard into Simon the leper's house? The act itself was fragrant, but it was not more fragrant than her spirit was.

The house in Bethany was Martha's house, but "she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet,

*Mark 14:3-9.

and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

Is this a new Mary, or is it one we have known before, changed now and renewed? She lives with Martha her sister in Bethany: but is Mary of Bethany the same who once had been "Mary called Magdalene"?

Through the significance of that house where Martha and Mary lived, one looks, as through an open window, into something deep in Jesus' spirit. There were hours when he must have been bitterly lonely. There were few who even approximately understood him. Food, and the flutter of well-meant preparations —was this all that it should be thought he craved? The old words which he had used before may have echoed in his soul again. "Man doth not live by bread alone!" The hunger of God in him cried out for the answering hunger for God in some other human heart. The things he knew, the things he had lived for and was about to die for—were they beyond the comprehension of his world? Was there to be no sensitive awareness and response to the inner meaning of the

*Luke 10:39-42.

Kingdom? Mary gave the answer to his questioning. When her listening face looked up to his, he knew that it was possible for the beauty of God to shine in a life that looked for Him. He had not been wrong in his belief that men and women had in them a capacity for communion with the Highest. A great peace fell upon his spirit. Whatever lay ahead, he knew his message had not failed.

Still in the day-time Jesus continued to teach in the temple. Mostly he spoke in parables, and the note of a great solemnity rang through them. A sifting of men's spirits was impending, and men should be judged according to the earnestness of their desire and according to the measure of their faithfulness to the gifts God had given to them each one.

The first of these parables was cast into a story of ten maidens who, in one of those wedding processions familiar to his hearers, took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Of these ten, "five of them were wise and five were foolish." The wise ones had taken care that the vessels of their lamps were full of oil, but the foolish ones had not. The bridegroom tarried, the night grew late, and as they waited, they fell asleep. Then at midnight there was a cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him." But the foolish maidens found to their consternation that their lamps had burned out. They tried to borrow oil from the others, but these had not enough to lend them. Then, while they were hurriedly seeking

here and there for more oil that they might join the festival procession, the procession went by. It entered into the house of banqueting, "and the door was shut."

Afterward, the belated maidens came and knocked at the door. "Open to us, open to us," they cried. But the bridegroom from within answered, "Truly I know you not." "Watch, therefore," Jesus concluded, "for ye know not the day nor the hour."* There shall be times in life when preparation or the lack of it shall be critical. There are distinctions which may be decisive, a coming late which may be too late, a shutting of the door which may not be lightly opened.

He told another parable of a man who was about to travel into a far country, and called his servants and put his affairs into their hands to administer until he came again. He gave to one five talents (which, if the parable were interpreted into our modern language, would mean some six thousand dollars), to another two, and to another one,—to each according to his ability—and then he took his journey. He that had received the five talents went and traded with these and made other five talents. He that had received two also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth and hid his master's money there.

After a long time, the master returned and called his servants for the reckoning. The servant to whom

*Matt. 25:13.

he had given the five talents came and brought five talents more, saying, "Thou gavest me these five talents, and I have gained with them five other talents." The one who had received two talents came with a similar report. He, too, had doubled the trust which was given to him. To both of them the master made the same answer. "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

But the third servant to whom had been given one talent came and said, "Master, I knew that you were a hard man, reaping where you never sowed and gathering where you never scattered, and so I was afraid. I went and hid your talent in the earth; and here you have your own again. But the master answered: "You wicked and slothful servant: you knew that I reaped where I did not sow and gathered where I had never scattered? Then should you have put my money with the bankers, that at my return I should have received my own again with interest." And he said to those that stood around, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents." Then Jesus concluded the parable with these stern words of description of life's inevitable responsibilities and its final reckoning. "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into

the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Also he told the parable which above all others summed up the message he would leave to his disciples. It is crystal-clear in its simplicity; yet it is deep as the transparent waters of an unfathomed lake. It does not use the words which theologians use; but the ultimate meaning of God is there. It contains no phrases of the creeds, but more shiningly than any creed it reveals what it was in Jesus that made him Christ.

In the majestic symbolism of the Last Judgment he expresses the finality of the spirit that was in him.

"But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And

*Matt. 25:30.

when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

But upon those on his left hand he pronounces doom.

"For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life."*

In this amazing parable there is the utter self-expression which is possible only for the supremely selfless. Such a declaration as that which Jesus made might have seemed colossal egotism; but with him the whole thought of his own personality was lost in his consciousness of what he had received from God. That day in the temple he knew that he might be rejected. Nevertheless the eternal reality of God which shone

*Matt. 25:31-46.

through all that he had lived for would judge the earth and challenge the souls of men forever. He knew that he was God's Son, because in him the love of God was burning. He was God's Son because he had come to seek and to save the least of his Father's children. When *you* do that, he said to those who listened to him, then you, too, are of God. In your lowliest act of compassion and of kindness, you shall recognize the divineness of that which you have seen in me. And unless you do recognize that this is the very quality of God, then you have thrown away your soul.

This understanding of the divinity of Jesus and of what it means,—the understanding which he himself inspired—is the only one which greatly matters. The phrases of the Christian creeds have value, but their value is subordinate to this. Put into metaphysics, the significance of Jesus may be smothered; put into life, it can shine like a flower through the most certain experiences of every day. "He that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." It is the only way to find God; it is the only way to believe in the God that was in Jesus. Go out, he said, to help, to serve, to lift, to minister and not to be ministered to; and some day you will discover that the God you have desired has all the while been dwelling in your soul. But if you look for God another way; if you think that He comes through your pride of life or your pride of opinion; if you think that you can have His Name and yet never see Him in that conquering quietness of love through which alone

God comes, then you have lost Him, and you go out into the dark.

Before that judgment the souls of men, and civilizations, pass. It cannot be evaded, and it holds the keys of life and death.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHADOW OF THE BETRAYAL

Meanwhile, through this critical week in Jerusalem, what was happening in the minds of the disciples? On the day of the entrance, it had seemed to them as if their most excited hopes were about to be realized. The crowd hailed Jesus as the Expected One. With that enthusiasm behind him, why might he not appear in power now? All this time he had fascinated them and drawn them on. In spite of the strange, dark things he sometimes said, they felt he had a greatness beyond anything they yet quite understood. But surely this would not go on eluding them always. Surely the time had come when they would *see* how great he was!

Then had come the cleansing of the temple; and in that moment of mingled fear and expectation, the disciples may well have felt that it was the crisis. The lines were drawn now once for all. Jesus must show his power, or the authorities would kill him. It was the moment for a final success—or else for such an unthinkable defeat as they flinched even from imagining.

One of the twelve could not stand the uncertainty and the apprehension any more; could not, or else would not. He chafed at what seemed to him the omi-

nous delay. Why did not Jesus act before it was too late —before the flood-tide of his opportunity began to ebb? And then he was racked by a still more intolerable thought. What if Jesus did not mean to act at all? What if he, Judas, had been misled from the beginning and Jesus was not the Deliverer he had dreamed, not the man with the sword who could set Israel free, not the proper patriot who should hate and slay his country's enemies—God's enemies!—but an idealist with a vague message of peace, when what men wanted was preparedness and war! Out of the dark tumult of his mind, a sudden impulse sprang. He knew what he would do! He would force the issue, and one way or the other he would be justified. He would make it so that Jesus would have to act, or show finally that he never could. He would save his Master from his fatal procrastination, if procrastination it was; and if it was something worse than that, then Master of his no longer! Either let him exalt himself, and Israel; or let him—let him take the consequences of the false hopes he had inspired. The chief priests wanted a chance to arrest Jesus, but they did not dare lay hands on him in the presence of the people. What they wanted was a chance to take him suddenly and secretly, without a tumult. Well, he would give them that chance. The forces in collision would be clear then. It would be Jesus against his enemies; and by what Jesus did, he would know at last what Jesus was,—or was not.

He went to the priests to sell a secret. He could tell them where Jesus might be found alone. They welcomed him with a delight which their crafty reserve would not too fully show. They counted out thirty pieces of silver as his price.

Thus began the betrayal, an act which to the imagination of later times has carried so dark and sombre a significance that it has given a new word to language. Judas used to be a name. It is a name no longer; instead it is a common noun for "traitor."

Always there will be fascination in the question as to why Judas did what he did. He had been one of the men whom Jesus chose as his nearest friends. He had lived with him intimately. What moved him to strike hands with Jesus' enemies?

There have been various attempted explanations. The first was the none too subtle guess of the early Church. Men looked at the surface of the act, and jumped to their conclusion. Judas received money for his betrayal; therefore it was for money that he did it. He was greedy. This explanation was current when the fourth gospel was written, and is reflected there. The gospel of Mark contains, as we have seen, the account of how in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper a woman came behind Jesus as he sat at meat and brought an alabaster box of nard and broke it on his head. Mark said, "there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this

ointment might have been sold for above three hundred shillings, and given to the poor."* But the fourth gospel does not speak in this general fashion. It reports Judas as having been the person who complained. But the gospel adds, "this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag, took away what was put therein."†

Apparently this is reading back into the character of Judas the ideas of a later generation. In the mind of the Church, Judas, represented now with horror as the traitor, was instinctively treated as though all his acts must be explained in sinister fashion. It was money that he wanted—money to be possessed by any means.

But this interpretation of Judas is not convincing. There is no real sign in the early records that it was greed that moved him. On the contrary, there is one plain fact that makes such a conclusion unreasonable. He agreed with the priests for thirty pieces of silver. That was an insignificant sum. If he had wanted money, he could have had far more. The priests realized the importance of information which would enable them to lay hold on Jesus at a time and place that would not run the risk of rousing a popular tumult. They would have paid high for it. Judas could have named his price. But he accepted the thirty pieces of silver indifferently and asked no more. His thoughts were not on money. Money was a trivial circumstance

*Mark 14:4-5. †John 12:6.

in an act to which he was moved by some much deeper reason.

It has been suggested also that the cause of his betrayal was jealousy. Judas—as already has been noted—may have been a Judæan; and as such he might well have felt the superiority of a man of the prouder province over the commoner folk of the north. Judæa had been the home of one of the mightiest and noblest of the tribes, and heroic memories of Israel's past rang in its name. Galilee, on the contrary, was suggestive of things that to a Jew were full of deep offense. The word means the circle, or the mingling, of the nations. It bespoke the fact that there in the north, by the colonists whom the Assyrians had brought in, by the infiltration of Greek and Roman peoples, foreign elements had been heavily intermingled with the Jewish stock. Judæa was the stronghold of the purer and stricter influences of the nation; and Galilee, on the contrary, was regarded by Judæans as though it belonged as much to the Gentiles as to the Jews. Judas might have felt for himself therefore a right to a sort of distinction by blood in that group of the twelve—a right to a peculiar and representative place. Furthermore, he seems to have been a man of practical abilities, for he was appointed to keep the money of the group and buy the things they needed. It is not uncommon for the man of affairs to feel a sense of superior importance to those whom he regards as more visionary and less practical folk—to believe that his

abilities are indispensable, and that the others would be wretchedly incompetent without him. Yet this Judæan and this shrewd man of the world found himself as a matter of fact outranked by the Galileans. Peter was allowed to be more of a leader than he. John was nearer to the Master's confidence. And James and Andrew also were privileged to share experiences with Jesus which he, Judas, had no part in. He was set aside and disregarded. He was treated—so perhaps he thought—as though he were of no particular consequence at all. But he would show them whether he was of any consequence or not. He would make them see what would happen to them if they lost the man they had regarded so lightly. If this fellowship of the twelve had no notable use for him, there was some one else who had. He would go make terms with Caiaphas, and then these Galileans would have a chance to judge the importance of Judas as friend or foe.

Under this conception of Judas' motives, he stands as striking not primarily at Jesus himself but at the disciples through Jesus. He would wreck this company that did not give him the honor due him, by overthrowing its head. This is not an incredible supposition. More than once in history there have been men who when they found they could not dominate a cause for their own advantage, have not scrupled to destroy it. It may thus be possible to believe that jealousy of the other disciples was the motive which led Judas to his act.

But this would yet not seem to be the most convincing explanation. Seeking the real cause, we are led again along the track of that fact which is so plain with regard to all the disciples:—namely, their belief when they followed Jesus that they were presently to share in the establishment of a glorious kingdom. They had become convinced that he was destined to become Messiah, and stubbornly there lodged in their minds the popular conception of what Messiah's reign should be. He would inaugurate a new era in the earth,—an era of power for Israel, and prosperity, and honor. As late as in the days of the journey up to Jerusalem, James and John had come to Jesus, asking that they might sit one on his right hand and the other on his left in the coming Kingdom. That vision fascinated them almost until the end. The iridescent bubble of their dream still rebounded from the hard shock of facts. But in that last week in Jerusalem, as the power of Jesus' enemies grew more threatening, they realized with sinking hearts that they might be facing what seemed to them disaster. They felt at length that the entire manner of expectation which they had cherished might be mistaken. They were faced now with the question of whether they would be loyal to Jesus under appallingly different conditions, when the whole sky of their hopes was growing dark.

But what if one of the twelve could not tolerate this consciousness that he had lost the kind of reward he had been telling himself he was going to gain? What

if he woke to realize that he had left father and mother and house and lands for the sake of Jesus, and that the kind of splendid earthly kingship that he thought Jesus was going to win, and the fruits of which he thought Jesus was going to share, were merely illusions? What if he told himself he had missed everything and gained exactly nothing in the end? Might not such a man, maddened by the thought that he had been made a fool of, go out in blind resentment of spirit to strike at what formerly he had followed, to hate what he had taken pride in, to repudiate with violence everything which his passionate resentment considered as the cause of his fiercely felt humiliation?

It was this apparently that Judas did. His mind may still have been torn between disappointment and a tempestuous hope. There was still a chance that he might not have been wrong,—still the chance that Jesus had the power to call such forces to his side as would rout his enemies. The only way to prove that was to force Jesus' hand; to put him into a position where, if he could act, he would have to act. Then if he did not deliver himself and vindicate his leadership, he deserved whatever happened. He had been a false claimant of messiahship, and those who had followed him had been deceived. What wrong was it then to let him die?

If this be the true explanation of Judas' act, then his tragedy was not wholly insincere. He was too fiercely impatient to wait and learn. The kind of hope

he had believed in was vanishing. He did not have the humility to understand that there might be another kind of triumph of the spirit of Jesus, which led along dark ways to a vindication which Jesus alone had been great enough yet to perceive.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST SUPPER, AND GETHSEMANE

The week went on, and the day of the passover approached. It was a time full of great associations and great memories. In the thought of the nation, the meaning of the feast led back to the far-off days of enslavement in Egypt. Under Moses, their fathers had come out from under the yoke of Pharaoh. The passover was a commemoration of that deliverance. It was a feast to be kept by every family, and by the whole nation as one family under the covenant of God.

The thought of Jesus may have gone back to other passovers, especially to that first one for which he came up to Jerusalem when he was twelve years old. Much had happened since then, around him and within him. He saw that the passovers of God were wider than any of the doctors of the law had suggested when he listened to them that day in the temple. There should need to be a new Israel, of those who in spirit were the children of God. And he must be the centre of that fellowship.

Apparently Jesus did not wait for the day on which the passover would regularly be eaten. On the evening before, which was Thursday evening, he gathered the disciples together. He would not stay now in Bethany. It was fitting that this supper, which meant so much

to him and which should mean so much to them, should be held in Jerusalem.

So he sent two of his disciples to carry out a plan for which he had already arranged the signal. "Go into the city," he said, "and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever you see him go in, say to the head of the house, the Master saith, Where is the guest-room where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared. There make ready for us."* The disciples followed his directions, found the room, and made the supper ready.

So as the day faded, Jesus came with the rest of the disciples. The whole of the twelve were there, including Judas. He had finished his agreement with the priests, and furtively he had come back. He would take his place as though nothing had happened, and nothing had changed. He must be there to make sure where Jesus was, and where he went, this night.

The gospel of John tells of something which is not mentioned in the other gospels; but it sounds like Jesus. It was a custom at feasts for servants to wash the feet of guests as they came in, with their sandals dusty from the road. Who would wash the feet of the company now? "Not I," and "not I," the disciples were thinking. Then Jesus rose. He took a towel and a basin of water and he began himself to wash their feet.

He perceived what had been going on in their

*Mark 14:13-15.

hearts; the old rivalry for pre-eminence, the old fear on the part of every man lest he seem subordinate to the next. "He that is the greater among you," he said, "let him become as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that serves. For which is greater, he that sits at meat or he that serves? Is not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as he that serves."*

He came to Peter,—emotional, embarrassed Peter. This was more than he could endure. "Master," he said, "thou shalt never wash my feet!"

"Unless I wash you," said Jesus, "you have no part with me." Peter's impulsive affection leaped now the other way. "Lord—wash more than my feet, then," he said. "Wash also my hands and my head!"

But Jesus said it was enough. With the washing of his feet, he needed then no more washing. He was not clean of all his faults, but from that moment he was beginning to be clean. He was clean at least of wrong ideas of what greatness was.†

They gathered about the table, and Jesus looked into their faces—troubled faces all of them, and one more uneasy than the rest. Jesus was too sensitive to men's unconscious revelations not to have had an intuition of what had been going on. He could look behind the shadows on Judas' face, and read the unwilling secret in his eyes. "Verily I say unto you," he said, "that one of you"—they were looking at him, startled now—"that one of you shall betray me."

*Luke 22:26-27. †John 13:1-11.

Out of the consternation came their voices, one after another,

"Master, is it I?"

"Is it I?"

He answered, "It is one of the twelve who eats with me from this dish. The Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him; but woe to that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had not been born."* Perhaps his grave eyes met the eyes of Judas, but he did not call Judas' name.

Instead he took bread and wine and set them before him. He put his hands upon the bread and said grace above it. He broke it, and gave a piece to each of the disciples. "Take ye," he said; "this is my body." Then he drank from the cup and passed it to them to drink. "This is my blood of the covenant," he said, "which is poured out for many."†

It was a new and greater covenant which he was establishing with them, the covenant of their fellowship in the gospel of the love of God to which he presently should give his final witness. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you," he said, "before I suffer: for I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."‡ "Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my

*Mark 14:17-21. †Mark 14:22-24. ‡Luke 22:15-16.

table in my kingdom, and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

The old passover commemorated the emergence of a people out of an old land of bondage into a new land and a larger life. It began with a force that seemed insignificant and grew to be great. So it should be now, but in a vaster way. That little fellowship in the upper room should be the beginning of a new world of experience for those men, and for uncounted others.

It is strange to think of the way in which what Jesus said and what Jesus did have been treated. Here, as in all the other great moments of his life, his spirit soared upon the great wings of an instinctive symbolism. If there was one thing which he was not, one thing from which the whole story of his conflict with the Pharisees sets him utterly apart, it was a maker of laws and a moulder of external obligations. It had been said of him before that "he spake to them in parables, and without a parable spake he not unto them." It was his chosen way of speech because even the heaviest and most prosaic minds could not chain a parable down into their precise arithmetic of religious form. If they understood anything at all, they had to understand a meaning which was *suggested,* and not defined—a meaning which could not be used to cramp men into a literal pattern, but set their imaginations free to follow on high, living ways. Such was his purpose in the upper room. But how often his purpose has been lost!

*Luke 22:28-30.

That supper with his disciples, in which he wanted for the last time and supremely to communicate to them his spirit, has been made into a disputatious argument from which the aroma of the real Jesus disappears. His own followers have gone back to the mind of the Scribes. Thus and so the law must be interpreted. The words which for him were spirit must come down and be put into a code as exact and unyielding as any the rabbis used to make. Since he spoke of his body, the sacrament must turn it back into his flesh. He must be put into the hands of priests, so that no man can really find him except through the proper priestly way.

But it is not true. The Last Supper has rightly become a sacrament. It is observed, as it ought to be, as a rendezvous with Jesus. And he is there. But he is there not through force of those corporeal things which ecclesiasticism talks of. He is there in that which is indeed his *Real* Presence—the presence of the spirit which made him what he was. Still, for those who have ears to hear, he is the poet of the widenesses of God. Still, as in that upper room, he is promising the Kingdom of a fellowship which the holiest of forms can only symbolize. Wherever he is remembered, he is there. And even when he is not remembered, but when men have learned the love which filled his life, then he is there also. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." All service is a sacrament, and they who serve belong to him.

After he had given them the bread and wine, there was a silence. The brooding mystery of strange things about to happen was in the air. Some time during the supper Judas had gone stealthily out. In the gospel of John the meaning of his going—the sense as of a shadow moving across the earth in him—is suggested in four simple words. "And it was night."*

Then through the silence came the voice of Jesus: "All ye shall be offended; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." Peter protested, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Poor, eager, stumbling Peter,—thus vehemently he assured himself aloud of what he wanted inwardly to believe.

Jesus answered: "Verily, I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice."

But Peter cried: "If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee!"†

Likewise said they all.

They sang a hymn. It was the last time their voices should sound with the voice of Jesus in their midst. Then they rose, went out of the door, and out of the house.

They were going to the garden of Gethsemane, just beyond the walls. Under the olive-trees, in the quiet, Jesus had gone before to pray. He would go again to-night. Judas knew where he would be.

*John 13:30. †Mark 14:27-31.

They came to the garden and found it empty. The night was growing late. The anxiety which they felt, without fully understanding it, had benumbed the disciples. Also they were heavy with desire for sleep.

"Sit here," said Jesus, "while I shall pray." He took three of them with him, as he went deeper among the trees: Peter and James and John. They were the same three who had been with him in other great moments, the three in whom, despite their many weaknesses, he found a special answer to his man's hunger for the loyal comradeship of men. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," he said; "abide ye here, and watch." But even the three could not watch that night. They saw him go farther into the garden; they heard the prayer that broke like a cry from his lips. They were dumb with apprehension; and before they knew it, and before he came back, they were asleep.

Jesus was in agony of soul. Long ago he had had an intuition of this night. He had seen the possibility of a career that would end in rejection and in death. He had set his feet upon the road that led to it, because it was the only road which consistently he could follow. But the end imagined and the end at hand were not the same—as they never quite can be. The private loneliness, the public shame, the awful weight of the seeming defeat which his own faith must somehow lift to victory—these came upon him now with a crushing heaviness.

It is not easy to choose death when life still seems a

lovely thing. For Jesus, until these latter days, it had been lovely. From beneath the olives of Gethsemane his thoughts must have gone yearning back to Galilee. He was the little boy again in Nazareth, climbing its hills, looking out upon the world that spread so wide before his wondering gaze. He walked the old paths again, and went down the familiar roads toward Capernaum. Memories that beckoned him with beauty—shimmering of the lake at morning, sunrise on the far white crest of Hermon, quiet of evening falling on the hills,—must all these melt into nothing but this black menace of Jerusalem, portentous and overshadowing, and in its uneasy streets those torches winking like evil eyes? Faces in Galilee of those who loved him; in Jerusalem, faces of the sullen crowd. And to-morrow a cross to die upon—to die alone, with not even the disciples able to understand. Could this be the road of the redemption meant for the Messiah; or was he caught in some hideous mistake? From the abyss of that awful question his soul cried out: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me!"

He came back to the disciples, wistful for understanding in this great struggle of his soul. He found them asleep. All asleep, even Peter! "Simon," he said, "do you sleep too! Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Then, with the old protecting instinct for their frailties, he added gently, "The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak."

Again he went away and prayed, as he had prayed before. And now he heard his answer. To his spirit's listening, God spoke; and he understood. He was sure again of the choice he had faced in the wilderness. Messiah's road, the true road, the tragic and tremendous road, lay clear.

He spoke to God as though God were very near "Not my will," he said, "but thine be done."

He came back for the last time, and once again found the disciples asleep. There is a note of half-ironic resignation in the words he spoke, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." So far as their fellowship with him was concerned, the chance was past. He would not wake them any more.

But presently the moment came when something else should wake them. There was a trampling of feet on the road that led to the garden, voices at the gate, the flare of torches through the trees. "It is enough," he said. "The hour is come. Rise up, let us go. He that betrays me is at hand."

The soldiers and servants of the high priest, some with swords and some with staves, were pouring in at the garden gate. At their head was Judas. He had given them a sign of identification, that there should be no chance of mistaking some one else for Jesus in the darkness. "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he," he told them. He went straight up to Jesus. "Master, master," he said, and kissed him.

One of the disciples drew a sword and struck one

of the men who had laid hands on Jesus. But Jesus stopped him. "Put up your sword into its place," he said, "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Then he faced the crowd of his captors. "Are you come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching and you took me not; but the scriptures must be fulfilled."*

Panic-stricken, the disciples melted away. But Jesus was not shaken. Sidney Lanier has drawn the picture in four lines:

> "Out of the woods my Master went,
> And He was well content:
> Out of the woods my Master came,
> Content with death and shame."

*Mark 14:32-50, Matt. 26:36-56, Luke 22:39-53.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE JUDGMENT HALLS

From the garden of Gethsemane the Temple guard led Jesus back to Jerusalem. It was growing sufficiently late now for the crowds to have melted from the dark streets. The fear of possible excitement and an attempt at rescue by the Galileans in the city was no longer serious. Jesus was brought safely to the house of Caiaphas the high priest.

There in the open courtyard, or in a room adjoining it, Jesus was guarded by his captors. None of his disciples were openly with him. But one of them at least did follow through the high priest's gates. Peter, emotional and impulsive, could not stay away. In Palestine, though the nights are likely to be warm, they grow cold before the morning, and in the courtyard the servants of the high priests had built a fire. There in the fringe of the firelight, Peter crouched on the ground and warmed himself, divided between the fear which made him want to hide in the shadows and the devotion which drew him irresistibly to see what was happening to Jesus.

Presently one of the women servants of the high priest came by. She stopped and looked at Peter curiously. Apparently she had seen him somewhere before, and recently—perhaps on one of the days when Jesus

was teaching in the temple. "You also were with Jesus of Nazareth," she said.

This unexpected recognition threw Peter into confusion. A sudden sense of danger eclipsed such wavering courage as he had. He began to stammer out his denial, and to pretend that he did not understand what she was saying.

He moved farther away; but he had not escaped from notice. The woman saw him again and began to say to those that stood by, "This is one of them." He denied it again. But now others in the courtyard began to take up the charge. "You *are* one of them," they said. "You are a Galilean. We can tell it from your speech."

Cornered now, Peter fell into a panic. The only idea that possessed him was to get away from these faces that hunted him with their malicious recognition. He began to curse and to swear and to say, "I do not know this man you speak of."

Somewhere in the dimness which was being streaked now by the gray light of dawn, a cock crew. Peter came to, with a shock of remembrance. He lifted his eyes, and there in the glow of the firelight he caught sight of Jesus turning to look at him. Cock-crow! What was it that Jesus had said about the cock-crow when they were going out from the supper toward Gethsemane at the beginning of that night? He, Peter, had said that whoever might forsake Jesus, he never would; and Jesus had warned him that before the cock crew

he would deny him more than once. He had done it. And there were Jesus' eyes. He fled from the courtyard out into the new day which was foredoomed to be worse than the night. And Mark's gospel says that "when he thought thereon, he wept."*

When the day had come, the great council met together with the high priest Caiaphas at its head, and Jesus was arraigned before it.

In the life of the Jewish nation the high priest was a formidable figure. During the Maccabean struggle some two centuries before this time, the high priesthood had once gathered to itself the function of king as well as priest. This extraordinary period of power ended with the overthrow of the briefly won independence of the nation, and when Palestine was conquered by the Romans and made a province of Rome's world empire, the high priests ceased of course to be as important politically as they had been before; but, nevertheless, there remained to them still a very great measure of authority and influence. It was the sagacious policy of Rome to interfere as little as possible with the peculiar customs and organizations of the peoples of the provinces, so long as these might be allowed without prejudice to the interests of the empire. So the high priests were continued in their headship over the internal affairs of the Jewish people. Each high priest was appointed by the Roman authority, but under that authority he was allowed wide

*Mark 14:53-72, Matt. 26:57-75, Luke 22:54-62.

spheres of control. He was head of the Sanhedrin, which decided for the Jews civil as well as religious matters. He was spokesman for his people in whatever representations might need to be made to Rome. He was held in no small measure responsible for the loyal behavior of the nation, and his tenure of office depended upon the success of his administration.

Caiaphas had been appointed by Valerius Gratus, the former procurator of Judæa, and had been continued as high priest by Pontius Pilate, who had succeeded Gratus, and was at this time in office. The high priests who preceded him had held office for hardly a year each; but Caiaphas kept his position for eighteen years. That fact is in itself sufficient evidence of his adroit abilities. He knew how to accommodate himself to those ideas and attitudes which the jealous watchfulness of Rome demanded. As a Jew, he shared the religious dogmas of his people; but as a Sadducee, he did not hold these with a too inconvenient fervor. He was a priest, but more particularly he was a politician.

When Jesus was arraigned before the council, various witnesses testified against him. What they said, however, was confused and contradictory. No successful case was being made against him, though some declared, "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands." To the mind of the council there was no sense to be made out of that. Caiaphas grew impatient. He stood up and asked

Jesus directly, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?"

Jesus looked at Caiaphas and kept silent. Failing thus to gain an answer to his first question, the high priest asked another. He was impatient to bring this examination to a decisive point. He would see whether Jesus dared with his own lips make a statement that would condemn him.

"Art thou the Christ?" he demanded.

Then Jesus answered. "I am," he said: "and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

Here was the supreme assertion of the meaning of his life. He stood at that moment in the hands of men who were his enemies. Before him in every immediate aspect lay nothing but disaster. Nevertheless, he dared to gather about himself the august majesty of the messianic promise. The power of the purpose of God in him should not be overthrown. In God's time, all that he had lived for and had proclaimed should conquer. The eternal Reality would show itself upon his side.

At the sound of Jesus' words, Caiaphas rent his clothes in a fury of protest which was half sincere and half a gesture calculated to accomplish his purpose with the crowd. Doubtless he was outraged at what he considered this incredible blasphemy. A prisoner calling himself the Christ! This man out of Nazareth with his peasant-following cowed and scattered, claiming to be Messiah! Here was reason enough in the

mind of any Jew for Jesus' condemnation. But Caiaphas was not merely following his own emotion. There had been policy in the question which he had addressed to Jesus, and there was triumph in the answer which he had secured. He could be sure now in the council and among the populace of Jerusalem of rousing all those religious passions which would make men bent on Jesus' death. "What further need have we of witnesses?" he cried. "Ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" With one voice they condemned him to be guilty of death.*

But Caiaphas knew that the matter was not yet at an end. The Sanhedrin might condemn, but they could not execute the death sentence. That was reserved to the power of the Roman procurator. Therefore Caiaphas had to begin now the process which would secure the execution of Jesus on the ground which most nearly concerned himself—the ground that Jesus threatened the safety and order of the province, for which Roman officials would be jealous, and which he, Caiaphas, and the other priests dared not let seem to be endangered.

From the hall of the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas and the rest of his company, therefore, carried Jesus to the near-by palace of Herod the Great in which the Roman procurator maintained his residence when he came up to Jerusalem, as he now had come, for the always crowded and dangerous passover week. Among the

*Mark 14:53-65.

Jews outside the council it would be circulated that Jesus was a blasphemer against all the holy truth of Israel. Caiaphas could be sure of the mob fury of this Jerusalem crowd behind him, in the pressure which he would now bring upon the Roman. But the accusation which he would bring to the procurator's own ears would have a different slant.

Caiaphas knew Pontius Pilate, the procurator. He had not been high priest these many years and studied Roman officials, and especially this one, for nothing. He was familiar with Pilate's record, and he knew where he was vulnerable.

In A. D. 26, Pilate had succeeded Valerius Gratus in the administration of Judæa, and he had entered upon his office in a spirit ill-calculated to make his tenure of it tranquil. He brought with him the Roman's proud contempt for the stubborn provincials over whom he was to rule, and little of that sagacity by which the abler officials—no matter what might be their personal feelings—were able to make their government respected. From the first he showed an aggressive hostility toward the stubborn people among whom he was placed. In defiance not only of those principles which justice might have laid down, but of those of common sense as well, he went out of his way to irritate the nation whose character he never understood. The first instance of this kind was his refusal, when he came with his legionaries into Jerusalem, to order the soldiers to remove the eagles and the images of the

emperors from their standards. The presence of these was an affront to the Jewish prejudice against anything which savored of idolatry, and a deputation waited upon Pilate for five days in protest. Instead of being moved by their earnestness, he was hotly resentful of it, and did not yield until the growing signs that very serious consequences might develop bred in him the fear which forced him to. Not long afterward, he thought to revenge himself by setting up in the palace of Herod the Great gilded shields, which the Jews thought to be another symbol of the worship of the emperor which was being inaugurated in the provinces at that time. They petitioned that these might be taken down. As in the former case of the images on the standards of the legions, Pilate sneered at the protest, and this time the Jews declared they would appeal past Pilate to the emperor himself. That threat exasperated Pilate in the highest degree, as he feared that they might really go to the emperor and impeach him with respect to other acts of his government—his corruption, his acts of insolence, and his cruelty. The Jews did carry their appeal to Rome, and Tiberius ordered Pilate to remove the shields, which result hardly altered for the better the relationship between Pilate and the Jews. It gave to Pilate's hatred the added rancor of his sense of having been humiliated, at the same time that it contributed to the Jewish opposition the fierceness of a first blood-taste of victory.

These facts are sufficient to illuminate the character

of Pilate. He exemplified few of the virtues, and many of the faults of the civilization to which he belonged. He had a preference for justice when justice did not interfere with his own passions, but there was no strength nor high impartiality in his spirit or his administration. He had all the arrogance of the harsher type of Roman, the Roman's confidence in the power of the sword as the one real force that could win and hold the world, the Roman's emphasis upon so-called practical considerations and contempt for influences which cannot be reckoned in tangible ways. That there could be any sense worth considering in the Jews' objection to the military standards, any substance in this talk of idols and idolatry, was to Pilate incomprehensible. He simply could not conceive how the idea which seemed a stubborn superstition to him could mean so much to them, and their insistence upon their point infuriated his intolerant scorn. Religion he held in contempt. There is a reference in the gospel of Luke to "Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices";* and though no further explanation is added to these few words, the reference evidently is to some brutal killing which Pilate ordered in the courts of the temple itself.

Nothing was real to Pilate except the material and the obvious, and nothing worth venturing for except these.

All this Caiaphas understood. He himself was not primarily interested, and he knew that Pilate would

*Luke 13:1.

not be, in the question of abstract justice. Caiaphas, for reasons of his own, wanted to remove Jesus because he was afraid of what might happen if Jesus were allowed to continue his disturbing influence in the nation's life. His business was to communicate to Pilate that same fear.

The examination of Jesus before the Sanhedrin had been held either in the late hours of the night or in the very early morning. From the standpoint of the priests, there was urgent reason for haste. At sunset the passover would begin, and it was impossible that they should go into the Roman judgment hall on the day of passover. Immediately after the feast Pilate might be returning to Cæsarea. It was necessary, therefore, that they should secure immediately his consent to Jesus' death.

Thus in the early hours of the day, the priests, together with a crowd of that element in Jerusalem which was subservient to their leadership, appeared in the great court of the palace of Herod. Upon the portico overlooking the court Pilate came out. In front of the priests and the people, with his hands bound as a prisoner, stood Jesus. He, the quiet witness to a Kingdom which was not of the earth, faced the curious scrutiny of the Roman, clothed with the authority of that empire which held the world then by the power of its conquering sword.

In the gospel of Mark the account of what followed is abrupt and brief. It says simply, "Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering

saith unto him, Thou sayest. And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled."*

But Pilate is hardly likely to have begun with so direct a question. It is probable that he had little if any previous knowledge of the prisoner there before him. Neither had he any way of knowing immediately what charge was preferred against him. The condensed description of Mark needs to be expanded by such added elements in the picture as are suggested in the beginning of the account as it stands in the fourth gospel. His first question would naturally be not to the prisoner, but to the priests who brought him there. "Pilate then went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man?"†

This question, fundamentally necessary, Caiaphas and his group wanted to avoid, for they knew that the basis of Jesus' condemnation before the Sanhedrin would have no weight with Pilate. They tried, therefore, to brush the question aside. They answered, "If this man were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee." That is to say, they wanted Pilate to take for granted that Jesus was worthy of death because they, the priests, had decided so. Let Pilate make no troublesome processes but act according to what they told him.

*Mark 15:2-5. †John 18:29.

It is hardly likely that they could have seriously hoped that Pilate would fail to resent such an arrogant proposal. All his Roman pride of office and all his instinctive hostility to these unruly men of an alien race rose up to deny their demand, and he barbed his answer with a cool and sneering sarcasm which he realized would go deep. "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law," he said. Of course he knew, and the Jews knew, that the irony of their situation lay exactly in the fact that they could not execute the penalties which their law imposed.*

They swallowed Pilate's insult, since there was nothing else to do; and they brought forth a charge which they knew a Roman must listen to. "We found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."†

Then Pilate turned directly to Jesus with his question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"‡ Evidently he was incredulous at the charge which the priests had preferred. Having no liking for these Jewish officials, he was not inclined toward giving them satisfaction. Moreover, there was something in the face of Jesus which must have puzzled him. Here obviously was no such person as the outlaws and insurrectionists with whom he had now and then to deal.

If Jesus had answered "no" to Pilate's question, the Roman, in all likelihood, would have despatched Cai-

*John 18:29-31. †Luke 23:2. ‡John 18:33.

aphas and his followers contemptuously from the judgment hall, and dismissed the case forthwith. But Jesus refused to seize this opportunity. The charge which the priests had brought, according to the only interpretation which the Roman understood, was of course false; yet Jesus would not deny it. In his eyes it was better that he should be condemned through a false idea of his kingship than that he himself should repudiate the claim which he had made in the high priest's house. Not in the way that Pilate understood it, but in a mightier way than Pilate dreamed, he dared proclaim himself the creator of a Kingdom stronger than the rule of Rome.

Pilate may have been impatient at his failure to draw from Jesus the answer which he expected, but he seems to have had no hostility against him. The accounts in all the gospels agree. He tried to find a way by which he could get rid of the whole matter. It was a custom at passover time that the governor should pardon some prisoner. Pilate suggested that he should pardon Jesus. But the priests would have none of it. They stirred up the crowd to shout for the release of Barabbas, a noted outlaw, who had been arrested for insurrection. "What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" Pilate demanded. And the mob replied with a furious shout, "Crucify him!"

"Why, what evil hath he done?" said Pilate.

But they cried out the more exceedingly, "Crucify him!"*

*Mark 15:12-15.

There, without further explanation, the original account of Mark ends. Pilate capitulated to the mob demand, and gave the order for Jesus' crucifixion. It may be that Pilate was simply too callous to concern himself with further effort. But there would seem to be good reason to believe that the forces working in his mind are more fully represented by the suggestion conveyed in the longer narrative of the fourth gospel. According to that account, Caiaphas and the priests did precisely what it could have been expected that they would do. They adroitly pressed their demands at the point where they knew Pilate to be vulnerable. He dared not seem to make light of a charge which involved disloyalty to Rome. "If thou release this man," they said, "thou art not Cæsar's friend. Every one that maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."*

Pilate had no mind to be involved in any further complaints made against him to the emperor. With sullen unwillingness, but nevertheless inevitably, when this charge was pressed he had to condemn Jesus. He handed him over to a squad of soldiers, to be crucified.

In the courtyard of the palace, the triumphant crowd waited for the march to the place of crucifixion to begin. Nothing now stood in the way of the satisfaction which they and their leaders had demanded; for Jesus was about to die. The hard face of Caiaphas was content. The authority of the priests in the temple would not be challenged any more by this usurper from Nazareth. Pharisees who nursed old grievances

*John 19:12.

against his treatment of the scribal code drew together with pious swellings of the heart that God's vengeance now was to be made plain. The crowd, whose passions the priests had stirred, shouted and jostled with the mob's savage and increasing appetite for cruelty. Pilate had gone back contemptuously into the palace. He had finished an ugly business, and now he would forget it. He was used to judging men; an execution more or less was not a matter to be concerned about too long. Whoever this Jesus may have been, he was disposed of now.

Only one figure in the whole crowded scene appeared to be the victim of all its converging forces. That was Jesus. The priests had accused him; the crowd had clamored for his killing; the Roman had condemned him. In the ferocious tumult, he alone was silent. Throughout what the others did, he alone did nothing. It was as though these other forces had gained unquestioned mastery, and as though his own significance were crushed and obliterated in their hard triumph. They were the judges and he the judged. It is true that in the perspective of history, the scene is strangely altered. He who then was judged becomes, in the still fact of what he was, himself a judgment, before which the priests, the crowd, and the Roman governor, pass like uneasy and disappearing ghosts. Of that there is to be consideration later. But for the moment there is only the appearance of his defeat.

CHAPTER XVI

CRUCIFIXION

When Pilate had pronounced the sentence, the Roman soldiers who were to carry out the crucifixion led Jesus from the court to a hall somewhere inside the palace. They had been listening to the process there before Pilate with a growing interest. Standing in the procurator's presence at disciplined attention, they could only look at each other out of the corners of their eyes and keep still. But now they could talk. So this was a king! The barrack-room rang with the coarse jest of it. A king must have his dues. Bring him a crown, somebody. Twist one out of thorn twigs. Get a robe for him. Tie him up to the scourging-post and see how he likes it for a throne!

From outside came the confused voices of the waiting crowd; inside, the hall was noisy with the brutal humor of the soldiers. They thrust the crown of thorns on Jesus' head. Round his shoulders they flung a purple cloak they had picked up somewhere. Then before they went about the cruel business of scourging him—the preliminary to crucifixion—they mimicked the homage a king should have. They saluted him, they bowed before him, and then, swaggering past, they struck him, and jeered, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

*Mark 15:16-20.

But this could not last too long. The crowd in the courtyard was impatient to have Jesus on his way to crucifixion. So they took the robe off him, scourged him, and brought him out. From Pilate's courts the procession started along the streets. The morbid fascination which will always lead a crowd to a place of execution was at work now. Doors were opening down all the alleys of Jerusalem. Behind the slow hoof-beats of the centurion's horse, the tramp of the soldiers, and the dragging of the cross over the stones, came the thick shuffle of the multitude. Mingled currents of emotion ran through it. There were women who looked with shrinking pity at the figure of Jesus, bleeding from the scourging, his shoulders cramped beneath the cross. Galileans must have been there too, some of whom loved Jesus, and still more of whom had for him the hot partisan loyalty which went out to a man of their own province caught in the grip of the hostile city. It was because of the Galileans, that the priests had been at such pains to make the arrest and trial of Jesus secret and swift. They might have tried by force to rescue him. But it was too late now. Rome had condemned him, and Rome did not easily let go what was in its hands.

The weight of the cross was crushing. Somewhere outside the walls of the city the soldiers stopped a man coming in from the country and made him lay hold of it. His name was Simon of Cyrene, and the gospel of Mark identifies him tersely as "the father of Alexan-

der and Rufus"*—men whom Mark's readers must have known.

Outside the city, the road climbed a low hill, and it was up this that Simon helped to drag the cross. Because of its rounded shape, the hill was called Golgotha, "the place of a skull." Its associations, too, may have helped to fix its name. For this was not the first time a living man had gone up Golgotha, and come down dead.

On the top of the hill the soldiers fell to work. Jesus was not the only one they had to crucify. Two thieves also had been brought out for execution.

Holes were dug in the ground to hold the crosses. The soldiers planted the cross for Jesus in the centre. Then with cords under his arms, which were flung over the cross-piece, they drew him up. A legionary planted a ladder against the cross and stretched the arms of Jesus out. He took an iron spike with a broad flat head, and drove it through one hand, into the wood; and then with bloody fingers, he shifted the ladder and fastened the other hand. He drove another nail through Jesus' feet. Then there was only one more thing to do. He picked up a placard which had been brought along, according to custom, and nailed it up at the top of the cross. The soldiers looked at it with a smirk, and the crowd muttered; for it read, "This is the King of the Jews."

The priests had already protested against that when

*Mark 15:21.

Pilate ordered it. "Write, 'He said, I am King of the Jews,' " they argued. But Pilate had already been irritated beyond patience. "What I have written, I have written," he retorted. And now the words which taunted all their national pride stared at them from the cross. Their anger flamed all the more hotly against Jesus. His blasphemous claim had given the Roman the opportunity for this insult.

The cruelty of a crowd can be more deadly than the cruelty of wolf or tiger, because the venom of speech is added to the brutality of deed. Shouts of scornful hatred were flung in Jesus' face. He had said the temple would be destroyed,—and there the temple stood, yonder on the other hill, while he was here nailed up to look at it. "Ha, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days," they shouted, "save thyself, and come down from the cross."

He did not answer. His lips were moving, but not toward them. He lifted his head, and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

In the tumult of their own voices, the crowd could hardly have heard that. Only the women heard it—the women who had followed Jesus and who with desperate courage had pressed near to the cross. Luke's gospel is the one which repeatedly and intimately reflects the memories of women, and it is by Luke that this prayer has been preserved.

The hours of the agony of the three figures on the crosses dragged on. No method of execution could

have been invented more lingeringly cruel. The torn flesh, the cramping of the muscles, the dreadful weight of the body pulling against the nails, thirst, fever, and the torture of the changelessness of those fixed hands and feet,—put the whole being of a man on their relentless rack. Yet because no mortal part was directly touched, men often were long in dying. They might hang alive on the cross until the second day.

On the two sides of Jesus the thieves were struggling horribly. One of them caught up the taunt of the crowd, and echoed it in his maddened pain. "Art thou not the Christ?" he railed; "then save thyself and us." But Luke tells how the other thief replied. (Are we listening again to the women telling Luke what they alone were near enough to hear?) He looked at Jesus' face and suddenly was awed by the mastery he saw there.

"Dost thou not even fear God," he called to the first thief, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss."

Then he turned to Jesus. "Remember me," he said, "when thou comest into thy kingdom," and Jesus answered: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

In paradise. When the mercy of death had come. But what *now,* of this dying? And what of its defeat? *That* was the deeper agony with which Jesus had to wrestle. Could he keep his faith in victory now, when the torture gripped him? Could he cling to his mes-

sianic confidence now with these broken hands? Could he still lift his Saviourhood up above all wreck of circumstance, and follow it on, past death, past time, to a vindication which should not fail?

He looked down upon the seething, hostile hill-top. Beneath him, the soldiers gambled for the clothes they had taken from him and from the thieves. Beyond, the crowd jostled as close as they dared, till now and then a soldier took his spear and drove them back. Their faces gloated with an evil satisfaction. As a pretender, what did he deserve but death? "Ha, thou that destroyest the Temple. Ha!"

A great darkness fell like an eclipse upon him. The words of the old psalm surged in his soul, and echoed agonized upon his lips.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Did those words ring to the very edges of the crowd, and reach even to Peter, cowering somewhere there? If so, they may well have wrung his heart so that he could bear no more. His master, whom he had loved; his master, whom he had denied,—in agony there, and it was too late to help him! No wonder then if he went blindly away with that last awful "My God, my God," ringing in his ears, and if this was what he supremely remembered when years afterward he helped John Mark write the story of that day. For with that cry John Mark's record of the words of Jesus ends.

But that was not the end. Jesus was to wrestle with

dire defeat, but not to be defeated. And it may be that it was from the lips of his enemies that he caught the unintended suggestion of the truth which above the darkness he lifted like a torch.

At the inner edge of the crowd, where their importance gave them place, were the chief priests. They talked to one another with a blending of vindictiveness and of purring, satisfied content. They wagged their heads together as with sidelong gestures they pointed contemptuously to the figure on the cross. "He saved others," they said, "himself he cannot save."

"He saved others, himself he cannot save." To the minds of the priests, and to the mind of their world, that meant ridiculous contradiction. Whoever would be a saviour, must first be able to save himself. Whoever would prove himself as God's anointed, must first show his power to bring God's deliverance to his side.

But the eyes of Jesus gazed beyond the shadows toward a mightier understanding. He saw again the vision which had come to him at the temptation. Messiah's kingdom might have to be greater than any earthly sign. The paradox of suffering lay somehow at the heart of God. Through the unwearying purpose which would not flinch from any pain the ultimate redemption must be won. At that moment on the cross, his consciousness of the meaning of Messiah's kingdom swept out beyond all bounds of ancient form. The shifting human pictures faded in the blaze of one assurance which for him encompassed all. Past igno-

rance and sin and men's gainsaying, beyond the dimness of this death which was closing in, mightier than the cross, flamed that one great certainty. It was—*God*.

He lifted his face.

"Father," he said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit."*

It was finished. The crowd streamed back down the hill. Timidly the women drew near, and some of the other disciples with them. Joseph of Arimathea also came—a man of rank who had been a believer, but had only half-dared confess it. They took the body down, and carried it to a grave in a garden which Joseph gave. "And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid."†

Of the end of that day, and of the effect of the death of Jesus upon those who beheld it, the gospels give various traditions which afterward were current. But the meaning of Calvary was not yet plain to those who were part of its immediate fact. There is need of imagination, looking back through the long perspective of the years, to interpret its drama aright. That is why there is truer history than the record of historians in these imagined words through which a modern dramatist

*Mark 15:22-41, Matt. 27:33-50, Luke 23:26-49. †Luke 23:55.

has brought the scene on Calvary creatively again to life:

In the blackness of the hill-top when the day was over, two figures, groping, came together.

Spoke the voice of one, a woman:

"I don't understand you. What were you saying yourself, just now? Only a little while ago I heard his blood dripping down here in the darkness. The stones are dank with it. Not an hour ago. He's dead."

Spoke the other, the centurion:

"He's alive."

Woman. "Why do you mock me? . . . Are you God, as you can kill and make alive, all in one breath?"

Captain. "He's alive. I can't kill him. All the empires can't kill him. How shall hate destroy the power that possesses and rules the earth?"

Woman. "The power that . . . Who?"

Captain. "This broken thing up here. Your son."

Woman. "My son, the power that . . ."

Captain. "Listen. I will tell you . . .

"I am a soldier. I have been helping to build kingdoms for over twenty years. I have never known any other trade. Soldiery, bloodshed, murder: that's my business. My hands are crimson with it. That's what empire means. . . . We stretch out our hands, greedy, grasping, tyrannical, to possess the earth. . . . It can't last: it never has lasted, this building in blood and fear. Already our kingdoms begin to totter. Pos-

sess the earth! We have lost it. We never did possess it. We have lost both earth and ourselves in trying to possess it; for the soul of the earth is man and the love of him, and we have made of both, a desolation.

"I tell you, woman, this dead son of yours, disfigured, shamed, spat upon, has built a kingdom this day that can never die. The living glory of him rules it. The earth is *his* and he made it. He and his brothers have been moulding and making it through the long ages: they are the only ones who ever really did possess it: not the proud: not the idle, not the wealthy, not the vaunting empires of the world. Something has happened up here on this hill to-day to shake all our kingdoms of blood and fear to the dust. The earth is his, the earth is theirs, and they made it. The meek, the terrible meek, the fierce agonizing meek, are about to enter into their inheritance."*

**The Terrible Meek*, by Charles Rann Kennedy, 1912, pp. 36-39.

CHAPTER XVII

VICTORY

Night came down over Calvary. To those who had loved Jesus, it may be that the most desolating part of it was that outwardly it was like any other night. The current of the city's life, which that day had been so turbid and so cruel, flowed back into its pools of silence. And up above, the same stars moved across the sky, exactly as they had moved the night before—moved distant and unheeding behind the crosses standing stark upon the deserted hill.

Somewhere in Jerusalem the disciples crept together, perhaps in the house of John Mark's mother, which afterward was certainly their meeting-place. What could they do but look blankly into one another's faces, and be dumb? The fact of their dead Lord was too immense for their minds to cope with then. Jesus was gone. The dream of what he would do was at an end.

It may be that later they began to pick up some fragments of comfort from each other. Strange memories began to quicken, like seeds which had lain unnoticed in their minds. In the old days, they had found the suggestion of Jesus' dying so incredible that they

had not always listened clearly when he hinted of it. Yet what was it that he had said about dying, and rising again?* Some one recalled that, and the others listened hungrily. But the picture of that ghastly scene upon the hill was branded too deep upon their newer consciousness. Nails in his hands and feet; a spear-thrust in his side; the great stone over the mouth of Joseph's tomb:—how could he live again?

The morning came, the day went by, another night; and nothing changed.

Then it was the day following the Sabbath—the first day of the week. Two women among the followers of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and another Mary, were early abroad. They carried spices to anoint the body of Jesus: and through the mingled shadow and the light of the growing day they sought the tomb in the hill-side where Joseph of Arimathea had taken the body from the cross. They went timorously, following the instinct of a devotion which drew them, though the chance seemed slight that they could express even this faint homage to their dead. For the stone which had been placed across the entrance to the tomb was heavy.

To their amazement, they found it rolled away. They stood still, bewildered and frightened. What had happened; and who had been here before them?

Says the gospel of Mark, the oldest gospel,—"entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting

*Mark 8:31.

on the right side, clothed in a long, white garment: and they were affrighted." Who was the "young man"? Was it the gardener trying to tell the women something they were too frightened to understand? Whoever it was and whatever he may have said, the women did not grasp yet a message of any confident joy. For the gospel, in the form in which the oldest manuscripts have preserved it, concludes: "They went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed. Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid."

Yet in their fear, something else was throbbing. Had not the "young man" at the sepulchre said to them, "Be not affrighted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen. He is not here"?*

Risen! What if that were true?—What if—it *was* true? In the breathless moment of their wondering, suddenly something happened which changed the course of human history,—something supernatural or not supernatural, according to what one's conception of the nature of this universe may be.

For suddenly Mary Magdalene saw Jesus. At first she did not understand that it was he. Then he spoke, and she heard his voice. She knew him. Her Master who had died on Calvary was alive, and had shown himself to her.

Back to where the disciples were gathered Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were running. Their

*Mark 16:1-8. A. V.

hurrying steps were in the street. Their hands beat upon the door. They told their breathless tidings, that Mary had seen the Lord.

At first the disciples would not believe. It was too much to dare believe.

But presently to them also the great experience came. Again as to Mary Magdalene, Jesus appeared—"appeared to Simon," "appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country"; appeared to the eleven gathered together in a room. "He stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." In the quietness of a great simplicity he came. He had passed through the incident of death. With the awe of the mighty mystery upon him, but in his own unmistakable self, he made the disciples certain that he was there.*

What was the manner of their certainty? It is impossible to tell. The Easter story is not recorded after the fashion of men who set down passionless minutiæ like figures in a ledger. The atmosphere of a glowing wonder breathes around it. It shimmers in an opalescent radiance like the sight of figures moving against the dawn. Through that Easter day somehow the presence of Jesus moved, tremendous in its new convincingness. What that meant, no description in words could ever fully tell. Simply the disciples knew, with that ineffable inner certainty which only the issues of life can prove, that they were in touch again with the

*Matt. 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-12, Mark 16:9-14.

vast soul of Jesus, dominant over death. To them henceforth the whole aspect of the world was forever different. And they were different. Men who had been cowed and despondent suddenly became possessed of power. Whatever else is veiled in mystery, *that* emerges clear as day.

The longest, and in some respects the most beautiful, of the stories of the resurrection appearances is that which Luke tells of two obscure disciples who were going out of Jerusalem on the evening of Easter day. They had heard the report of the vision of the women at the tomb, but they were not convinced. Heavy-hearted, they went along the shadowed road as the twilight fell. Then, in the limpid words of Luke, the narrative flows on:

"And they communed with each other of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him, Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all

the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Yea and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

"And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further. And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, when he sat down with them to meat, he took the bread, and blessed; and breaking it, he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened

to us the scriptures? And they rose up the very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread."*

Such was the memory of that evening as the after-years preserved it. Through the forms of it, a great light shines upon the growing understanding of the disciples. It is the story not so much of Cleopas and of his unnamed companion as it is the story of the spiritual history of all the men who had been most close to Jesus. On the road which had been shadowed, the Master was walking again at their side. When their eyes were opened, they knew that he was there; and in every developing experience, they could say one to another, "did not our hearts burn within us by the way?"

If now it should be insisted that there be further proof of Jesus' resurrection, and if men should say they will not believe it unless by some sort of legal witnesses it be demonstrated that the same body which was broken on Calvary came out of Joseph's tomb and that it was this same body which the disciples saw, then the answer is that not by physical facts can spiritual realities be proven. The kind of argument which has attempted to make the truth of the risen and living Jesus

*Luke 24:13-35.

depend upon the evidence for the reanimated body and the empty tomb has always gone astray. And this is true notwithstanding the fact that it was in the very early Christian community that this mistake began.

The process is plain in the gospel accounts of the coming of the women to the garden with their spices at the beginning of the day. The earliest gospel says that when to their amazement—and also to their dismay—they found the stone rolled away from the mouth of the tomb and the tomb empty, they saw "a young man clothed in a long white garment"—who spoke to them words which in their agitation they did not clearly grasp. But in the gospel of Luke "the young man" has become "two men in shining garments," and in the gospel of Matthew, "the angel of the Lord" whose "countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." Christian valuation, moved by the same instinct which makes the artist blazon in the splendor of symbolic coloring the inward meaning of the thing he paints, looked back upon that morning in the garden with an imagination which could do no other than clothe it with shining garments and with raiment white as snow. But in the original fact it was not by such things as these that the faith of the women was created. For them at first the only light was the low sunrise slanting uncertainly into the shadows of the tomb, and uncertainly also into the shadows of their bewilderment. It was what came later that gave them their thrilling new conviction. Not by testimony

about Jesus' crucified body, but rather by their direct awareness of the living presence of their risen Lord, were their lives made new.

So it was also with the other disciples. Their faith did not depend upon evidence of an empty tomb. Neither was it wrapped up with any unchanging conceptions of the nature of the resurrection body. The accounts in the gospels manifestly represent the appearances of Jesus as independent of ordinary physical laws. He comes and goes mysteriously. What happened to the body laid in Joseph's grave is something never fully to be explained. The point is that such an explanation, or the lack of it, does not touch the heart of the abiding issue. That centres simply in the vital conviction of the disciples that Jesus, in a new way, yet with his unmistakable spirit clothed in recognizable form, not only showed himself to them alive but gave them the commission of that gospel of God's undefeated love for which he had dared to die. Christian apologists may advance other evidences for the resurrection; but it was only *this* which mattered first, and which matters last.

Or rather, it was this conviction plus its consequences. The conviction alone might have been called illusion; but illusion shows itself to be such because it always crumbles at the touch of life. The real and the unreal for the moment may look alike; but they cannot result alike. It is not illusion but illumination which keeps men walking on a steady road toward in-

creasing mastery of life. It is not fantasy but fact which makes men creators of a new and larger world of fact. And that is what the disciples became. Because of Easter day, their own inner selves were recreated. Their inhibitions of fear dropped off like broken chains. They became not only men of faith, but builders of a new fellowship of faith. They established the Christian Church, which, with all its human faults, has produced in great individuals a higher and more valiant sainthood, and has touched the common life with a steadier redemption, than any other institution of the world. Facts so great must trace back to a sufficient cause, and the only cause sufficient for them was a real experience by the disciples of the undying life and love of God in Jesus. The gospel accounts of the resurrection do not grow less convincing as their date fades farther into the past. If not in all their details, nevertheless in their essential message, they grow rather the more convincing as the years accumulate the effects which have flowed from that which they describe.

Also the disciples were beginning to understand what sort of kingdom it was which Jesus had won on Calvary. Little by little they were comprehending his vision, which in the old days they had never been sensitive enough in spirit to perceive. Looking back now, they could see that the cross was not an accident. "Ought not—must not—Christ to have suffered these things," in order that he might enter into his glory?

A new kind of victory slowly revealed its meaning. Out of loss had come healing, out of sacrifice had come redemption, out of the love that dared to die had come the saving life.

At first, it is true, their dawning sense of their Master's spiritual victory was entangled with old forms of expectation. They looked for some immense and cataclysmic miracle of Messiah's Kingdom. Jesus who had died should come as once they thought that Jesus in his life should come—visibly as the anointed conqueror and judge. "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* they were saying.

But steadily the poetry of his deeper meaning was working upon the prose of their once stolid thought. They began to understand, at least in glimmerings, that no crude outward accidents could make him more kingly than he already was. Already he was royal with that only royalty which endures—the royalty of love which alone can win unforced allegiance. They recalled with a new tenderness how he had said, "whosoever would be first among you, shall be your servant,"† and "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."‡ And the disciple who wrote the last gospel, recounting how on the last night in Jerusalem when they came in from the dusty streets to the sacred quiet of the upper room, Jesus took a towel and girded himself and washed the disciples' feet,—prefaced that

*Acts 1:6. †Matt. 20:27. ‡Mark 10:45.

description with this awed recognition of his Master's mind, "Jesus, knowing that he came forth from God and goeth unto God."*

This then was the victory which he foresaw, and lived and died for—the victory of God over the inner realm of human souls. This was what he chose over the lesser alternatives presented to him in the temptation. And it was this which worked in him that immense transfigurement of understanding by which he dared believe that out of a cross he could build a throne.

Once the disciples had begun to sense this truth, they began also to perceive that the victory of Jesus was now at work in them. They were to become as he had said, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set upon a hill. They were heirs of a Kingdom more far-reaching than that which James and John had imagined when they asked that they might sit upon thrones on the right hand and on the left of Jesus.

It was through a great new genius that this interpretation chiefly came. Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the early Christian community, became by dramatic conversion Paul the Apostle. Arraigned once before Agrippa, he described the supreme spiritual experience in which one day on the road to Damascus he had seen a great light and heard a voice that was the voice of Jesus; "wherefore, O King Agrippa," he said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."† He

*John 13:3. †Acts 26:19.

wrote in his letter to the Christian community in Corinth that the risen Jesus "last of all appeared to me also,—as to the child untimely born. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*

Like the earlier disciples, Paul held at first—and perhaps never utterly transcended—the expectation of a swift second coming of Jesus as a miraculous Messiah. But gradually these old, inherited forms of thought melted like drifting smoke before the white fire of a more immediate religious certainty. Already the Kingdom of Jesus' mastery was established in the world. "It is no longer I that live," he cried, "but Christ liveth in me."† "We preach Christ crucified," he dared to say, "unto Jews a stumbling-block and unto Gentiles foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men . . . And base things of the world, and the things which are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are."‡ And later, to a little Christian company in Rome—Rome which held the earth beneath the domination of her eagles, Rome of

*I Cor. 15:8-10. †Gal. 2:20. ‡I Cor. 1:23-25, 28.

the marching, far-flung legions, Rome that seemed so cruel and so unconquerable—he poured out the lyric glory of his faith in a greater power that was in Jesus. "What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who is against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

And the disciple who wrote the latest gospel, reading the meaning of Jesus' life in the light of the unfolding years, recorded him as having said before he went to crucifixion, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself,"† and as having promised his disciples, "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."‡

A long time ago those words were written. A paradox they seemed then—or a contradiction, and a foolishness. Yet nevertheless the generations cannot escape their haunting power. The incredible venture which Jesus dreamed upon the hills of Nazareth, espoused in spite of his temptation, and carried up to death and through it on his cross, is moving forward toward fulfilment.

*Romans 8:31, 35, 37-39. †John 12:32. ‡John 16:33.

"O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging,
Strong beyond speech, and wonderful with woe,
Whither, relentless wilt Thou still be urging
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to go?
Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love Thee so?"

Studdert Kennedy, that seer and prophet of the hearts of common men, has written, "Through the vast complexities of our modern civilized world made one by God, the crucified Christ is looking down upon us—with death in His bleeding hands and feet—but life in the light of His burning eyes—and demanding from us all—every individual man and woman—a choice between the glory of Reason, Patience, and Love, and the glory of Force, and Wrath and Fear . . . He will not go away. I do not believe He will let us alone. He is making us waver all over the world. He is going to drive us to a decision with His wounded hands. He will not let us have His world for a playground, a battle-field, a factory, or an Empire any longer; we must give it to Him. *We must give it to Him or—or there will be darkness over all the earth from the sixth hour until the ninth—and that may be a thousand years.* We must decide, and this decision is for you and me."*

Along the desolate shores of Labrador, among the missions and hospitals which he has founded, goes Dr. Wilfred Grenfell. There, in this twentieth century it is true, as it was true with the Apostle Paul long ago,

**The Word and the Work*, by G. A. Studdert Kennedy, 1925, pp. 80, 84.

that "the love of Christ constraineth" him. And he has written: "The faith in Christ upon which I have based my life has given me a light on life's meaning which has satisfied my mind, body, and soul. . . . Faith came to me with the vision of Christ still alive in this world to-day. He meant to me a determination, God helping me, to follow Him."*

Whom else is there to follow on the road that leads to more abundant life? Or who can gainsay the voice which has come from India,—through *The Christ of the Indian Road?*

"I asked an earnest Hindu one day what he thought of Christ. He thoughtfully answered: 'There is no one else who is seriously bidding for the heart of the world except Jesus Christ. There is no one else on the field.'

"Sweep the horizon—is there any one else?"†

So the only miracle which matters in the course of history moves on—the miracle of the power of the mighty soul that dared embody God. So in spite of transient contradictions, of hate and death and crucifixion, the deathless power of love as Jesus lived it lays hold on human hearts. His vision of his Kingdom was not in vain. From the old discords of human blundering, the gigantic mastery of his spirit is lifting life little by little up to the music of the purposes of God.

**What Christ Means to Me,* by Wilfred Grenfell, 1927, pp. 77, 81.
†*The Christ of the Indian Road,* by E. Stanley Jones, 1925, p. 46.

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

Now that the pages of this book melt away behind me, and the details which have filled its foreground fall into perspective, I ask myself what is it that I see.

Then into my memory there comes a picture,—of a single autumn afternoon, by the shore of Puget Sound. To the east a long barrier of mountains lifted itself abruptly above the coastal plain. All the peaks seemed of an even height—until suddenly, where the clouds dissolved, I saw a shining whiteness against the sky. There in majestic dominance, soaring as high again as all the other high but lesser mountains, the dazzling, snow-clad crest of Mt. Rainier floated against the blue. Mighty as it was in its deep-planted strength, it yet hung there ethereal and unearthly; and all the world beneath it became invested with a mystic wonder from that high beauty shining there.

So do I perceive the figure of Jesus, made of the substance of our earth and yet not of it, towering above the lesser heights into that strange distance where we know not whether the skies come down or the hills go up, but only that they melt and meet.

And as a mountain lays its spell upon the minds of those who dwell beside it, till presently it is clothed with story and with song, so it is not strange that the

greatness of Jesus should have waked the lyric soul in those who looked up to him. The stories of the infancy, the lovely rhapsody of angels singing above the plains of Bethlehem, the adoration of the Magi—all these may not be history, but they are the instinctive colors in which men sought to catch the atmosphere of meaning which did in fact surround this life that rose so high into the sunlight and the stars.

Yet the simile of the mountain can never lead us all the way as we seek to understand the significance of Jesus. It is partial and imperfect, as all similes must be. It can suggest his greatness in the eyes of men; it cannot interpret the subtler inwardness of his relationship to God.

Was he like a ladder then—like the ladder in the dream of Jacob, set up on earth, but with its top reaching into the heavens, whereon the angels of God went up and down? Did his nature thus by a dual contact bring together the two different and sundered realities of God and man?

So Christian theology has often argued, and in so doing it has *made* the gap which then laboriously with its heaped-up explanations it has tried in vain to bridge.

For it was not in being unlike men that Jesus was most like God. Rather it was when he was most like what men are meant to be that he was most fully what God is. Since "God made man in his own image" then it is from man that we can best discover God. That

which is most beautiful in men *is* God. The purity, the courage, the love, and the devotion which shine in the great souls are partial lights of the one light of God. And if any man express the perfection of human possibilities, then in and by that fact—and not through some miraculous difference from it—he is the incarnation of the life of God.

When the disciples knew Jesus first, they had no theories about him. Simply they were drawn to him, and wanted to follow where he went. They shared his life, and the power of his life touched them. Day by day he widened the horizon of their thinking. In the face of Jesus they saw the fact of God; and looking at him they understood the measure of life—so strong, so joyous, and so unafraid—which belonged to the soul that God had filled. Therefore when they asked themselves what God is like, they did not have to go to the dull definitions of the Scribes; they turned to Jesus, who spoke with authority, and who was authority. Even in all His awful greatness, God must yet be essentially like Jesus; for in Jesus they had found all that they could conceive of as adorable in God.

It is this Jesus who has been moving for me through the pages of this book. I see him so fully human that from amongst those same forces by which all lives are shaped he shaped his own. Because of that, and not in distinction from it, I see in him also the incarnation of the Most High God. As attestation of his divineness, all fervid effort to prove that he was born

by a physical miracle or that by this or that portentous difference he was separated in kind from the conditions of our human struggle and achievement, seem to me mere pathetic missing of the mark. He needs no such adventitious signs. He *is* that which in the vital contact of his life he showed himself to be. "God is a spirit," "God is love"; and through the perfect attunement of Jesus' spirit the Love that is God drew near and spoke to men so that they understood. Always the heart of the universe has been and is what Jesus showed. This is the transfiguring religious conviction which comes through him. This is the experience which underlies all creeds, and this is the living meaning which speaks through the ancient creedal words. "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father,"—what does this mean except that God is what Jesus was, and that as men trusted Jesus, so they can trust the Eternal One from Whom his life came forth.

Is God then also the Poet, shaping the broken syllables of our human choices into some far beauty which neither ignorance nor sin can finally defeat? Is destiny no aimless thing, but rather the singing purpose of the Father who understands the meaning of His children's lives and knows how at last to tune them with His own? It is this that I believe when I remember Jesus, and how he lived and died—and lives.

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